



## Sharkskin technical exposure protection

[Global dive](#) has always prided itself on only stocking the best dive equipment available. High performance exposure wear is no exception. However, recently we have been made aware of a couple of new products to hit the market. They claim to be “cheap versions of sharkskin” so we decided to check this out and decide if they are good enough to be compared to Sharkskin.

For 3 years we have been amazed at how good the Sharkskin garments have performed, in a huge range of environments and uses. The range has grown and we have been committed to carrying the full range of Sharkskin designs and sizes in-store. Previously, the only type of performance garment to come close is the Thermocline range by English company Fourth Element. The reason for this is both companies use only the best materials, sourced from Malden Mills, Boston, USA - the original and only supplier of Polartec®. The Polartec textile is then mated to a breathable technical membrane layer, which offers wind proofing and water resistance. Finally, a 4 way stretch outer layer is added, giving you sun protection and durability.

What this means to you, is by adding a Sharkskin layer, you are adding the equivalent warmth of a 3mm of wetsuit, without the added buoyancy, and you have a windproof layer that reduces the between dive chills. The Sharkskin garment is non chaffing, antimicrobial and itch resistant so can be worn all day long.

The recently launched “cheap” versions certainly look similar at first glance, but when they are inspected closely, there are many differences. The main differences are;

The Chinese manufactured thermal layer has a much more porous fleece allowing greater airflow through the pile. This means less thermal protection. Sharkskin material is much less permeable to air and so stops the convective and evaporative cooling process – so you stay warm. The more porous, fleece also allows the garment to sag, (bag out) so the garment doesn't hold its shape over time. This causes discomfort when worn under wetsuits and added drag when worn by itself – for example for paddling and other watersports activities

We spoke to a dealer who had both brands available to him. Initial excitement of having a “cheaper” alternative lead to disappointment when garments were being returned due to sagging, and tearing after short spells in use. He subsequently removed the garments from sale. Sharkskin were keen to test the other brand so sent both their own garment and the “cheaper copy” to several kayakers and multisport participants. The response was pretty unanimous. The Sharkskin out performed the other garments in every test. The most important feedback was simply that Sharkskin keeps you warmer and lasts longer with superior wear. The wear was evidenced from comparing sharkskin and the other garment after going through the washing machine multiple times.

So, Global Dive will continue to only sell the original Polartec lined undergarments. The price difference between the warmer garments and the inferior copies is irrelevant in my opinion. Cheap is sometimes good, but in this case not better value. My recommendation is that the best value is in the original garments. The extra dollars buy you a much warmer garment that will last longer and give you more enjoyable dives.

We stand by the products we sell and remind our customers that the Sharkskin products all come with a performance guarantee. If the garment does not perform as advertised, bring it back for a full refund.

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