

# U.S. Coast Guard searches for missing dive instructor off Key West. Here's what we know

[By Omar Rodríguez Ortiz](#) Updated August 02, 2023 9:00 PM

Lost Reef Adventures dive instructor Thomas Aaron Faulkenberry, 44, of Stock Island, was last seen off Key West on Aug. 2, 2023. *U.S. Coast Guard*

The U.S. Coast Guard, state and local authorities were searching on Wednesday for a 44-year-old dive instructor who disappeared in the morning off Key West.

Lost Reef Adventures dive instructor Thomas Aaron Faulkenberry, 44, of Stock Island, was last seen after a 9:20 a.m. dive in the area of the Vandenberg wreck, about seven miles south of Key West International Airport, wearing black diving gear with black fins, the Monroe County Sheriff's Office said.

The Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, a former 17,120-ton military troop transport and missile-tracking ship, [sits at the bottom at 140 feet](#).

The sheriff's dive team has been using its remote-operated vehicle in the search. It's used to search at extreme depths by providing sonar imaging to the surface.

[#BREAKING @USCG](#) air and surface crews are searching with partners for 44yr old Thomas Faulkenberry, who was last seen diving, Wed., wearing black dive gear with black fins in the vicinity of Vandenburg Wreck.

Anyone with more information call Sector Key West @ 305-282-8727 [#SAR pic.twitter.com/AQoRszyLPI](https://twitter.com/AQoRszyLPI)

— USCGSoutheast (@USCGSoutheast) [August 2, 2023](#)

*Anyone with information about Faulkenberry is asked to call 911 or Coast Guard's Sector Key West at 305-282-8727. Boaters can also notify the Coast Guard via marine channel 16.*

## **Teenager dies after 'free diving' off the Florida Keys**

This is at least the second diving incident this week in waters near the Florida Keys.

On Tuesday, a 13-year-old boy died in a hospital after what deputies called a "free-diving incident" about eight miles offshore earlier that day.

The sheriff's office didn't release specific details about what happened, other than to say the teen was in about 25 feet of water with another 13-year-old when it happened.

This story was originally published August 2, 2023, 7:30 PM.

Omar is a bilingual and bicultural journalist, covering breaking news in South Florida for the Miami Herald and El Nuevo Herald. He has a master's degree in journalism from the University of Texas at Austin and a bachelor's degree in education from the Universidad de Puerto Rico en Río Piedras.