

2010 USA Swimming Safety Chairs Workshop  
July 9, 2011  
Minneapolis Minnesota

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The USA Swimming 2011 Safety Chairs Workshop was held in Minneapolis over the weekend of July 9, 2011. The workshop was conducted by members of the USAS Safety Education Committee and representatives from Risk Management Services, Inc. Safety Chairs from 40 LSCs were in attendance. Following is a summary of important information presented on each covered topic. Numerous handouts were provided on various topics discussed below. This report summarizes the presentations, audience discussions and some of the material from the handouts. The handouts are too voluminous to include with this report but if anyone wants a copy of the handout for any particular topic you can contact the PVS Safety Chair to receive a copy of additional materials.

**Key Elements of Open Water Safety for LSCs**

*(Presented by Steve Munatones, Founder Open water Source)*

This presentation centered on a discussion of “best practices” which if followed will improve overall safety for athletes competing in OW swims.

1. Important to follow USAS legislation passed on May 11, 2011 regarding sanctioning of OW competitions, development of a safety plan and proper staffing of the meet.
2. Provide as much detail about the course, water temperatures, safety plan, feeding stations if used, support boats, etc. as possible.
3. When taking water temperature readings, test the water at shore and 50 yards out and at furthest point out on the course. Take temperature readings below the surface not right on the surface.
4. Boats should be used to corral swimmers around buoys.
5. Check local policies about lightening. It is different in different parts of the country.
6. Stand-up paddlers are better than sit down paddlers in boats. Can see much more if standing.
7. Pay attention to race staff organization. The person responsible for safety should have no other responsibilities.
8. Look for qualified and knowledgeable volunteers. Contact veteran’s organizations for ex-military, especially ex-Navy Seals.
9. If using jet skis or kayaks, have two people on each craft and tow a board for swimmers to use to get out of the water.
10. Play “what-if” situations before the meet and formulate action plans to deal with potential issues such as swimmer having a heart attack, swallow jelly fish, experience a bad cut, suffer from hypothermia. Don’t wait until an emergency happens to develop a plan to deal with it.
11. Know positively how many swimmers enter the water, not just how many entries you are supposed to have. Know how many swimmers exit the water.
12. If a swimmer is pulled from the water, how is this tracked so that you know the swimmer is out of the water before the finish.
13. Volunteers should be easily identifiable. Swimmers must know how to recognize a volunteer worker especially safety personnel.
14. Extensive use of radios is mandatory.
15. Good communications systems, proper equipment and trained personnel are critical to a successful meet.
16. Coolers of water should be on the race course and easily identifiable and accessible to swimmers.
17. Recommended that all swimmers be equipped with transponders so they can be tracked. Adds about \$10 per athlete to the meet’s cost.
18. Statistically, most people in open water swims who have to be pulled from the water are pulled in the first 100 yards of a race. Need to have “swim angels” stationed along first 100 yards of course to lend assistance if needed.

19. Feeding stations need to be available for competitors in races over 5K.

### **Ensuring Safety of Swimmers with a Disability (SWADS)**

*(Presented by Gail Dummer, Disability Committee Chair)*

This segment of the Workshop covered some of the implications of the Americans with Disabilities Act(ADA) and involved a discussion of the safety issues regarding Swimmers with a Disability (SWADS) in practice and competition.

1. ADA requires that reasonable accommodation be provided to SWADS. Examples of things that may need to be modified at practices include:
  - a. Assignment to an appropriate practice group and special accommodations regarding lane assignments
  - b. Providing a modified workout and season plan
  - c. Use of modified training equipment
  - d. Allowing use of personal assistants
  - e. Modified coaching techniques
  - f. Requirements for special forms of communication
  - g. A guarantee of locker room accessibility and accommodations
  - h. A higher level of supervision
  - i. The overall quality of coaching must be of the same quality and standards as for able bodied athletes
  - j. Each SWAD is different. Fair assessment methods must be used to determine ability to provide accommodations and provide the SWAD with an equally enjoyable and productive experience as is provided to able bodied athletes.
2. A club may reject a SWAD from participation for the following reasons:
  - a. Safety concerns for the individual cannot be reasonably accommodated. Club must be able to prove that the SWAD is at risk of harming his/her self, at risk of harming other swimmers or at risk of harming spectators.
  - b. Inability of SWAD to satisfy performance standards
  - c. Inability to satisfy club expectations about payment of training fees or attendance at practice.
  - d. An individual who cannot be reasonably accommodated may be excluded
3. Resources
  - a. USA-S Disability Swimming Committee – contact staff liaison Randy Julian:  
*rjulian@usaswimming.org*
  - b. Disability swimming section of USA-s web site: <http://www.usaswimming.org/disability>

### **American Red Cross**

*(Presented by Connie Harvey, ARC Safety Services)*

A brief presentation was made by Connie Harvey on the working partnership between the ARC and USA-S. Several important points were covered:

1. Coaches should be certified in both adult and child CPR
2. Coaches should undergo refresher training every 6 months

## **USA Swimming Insurance**

*(Discussion led by Sandi Blumit, Risk management Services)*

This was a free-form discussion about USA-S insurance, what's covered and what's not, and included lively interaction between Sandi and the workshop attendees. Following are interesting and in some cases very important tidbits of information:

1. It's ok to have USA-S swimmers and Masters swimmers practice together. This does not void insurance.
2. In open water competitions, volunteers and volunteer watercraft are covered. Paid workers and rented watercraft are not covered.
3. After water depth changes were enacted for purposes of teaching and for competitions, not a single bottom strike has been reported when water depth met the new standards. In last 6 months, 6 bottom strikes have been reported in water depths that did not meet the minimum depth standards. Clubs and LSCs need to reemphasize water depth rules and make sure they are complied with.
4. Clubs that violate dive certification rules can lose USA-S insurance permanently.
5. Massage Therapists should be USA—S members with background screening. This includes club provided and paid therapists.
6. USA-S insurance provides standard coverage of \$1M/\$2M. If a facility being rented by a club requires more coverage then is provided by the standard USA-S coverage, it is available free-of-charge. All the club has to do is provide Risk Management with a contract from the facility's renter that documents the requirement for higher levels of insurance coverage. USA-S insurance will be increased to the level required by the facility's renter up to \$5,000,000 in liability coverage. Failure to ask for the increase in coverage before the fact will freeze the level of coverage at the \$\$1/\$2M level. In plain words, the increase in coverage MUST be requested and approved before the rental. It will not be retroactively increased in the case of an incident. This will result in the club facing a potentially large uninsured liability if an incident occurs.
7. USA-S provides no coverage for intentional acts including acts of sexual misconduct.
8. No coverage is provided for any act that violates federal, state or local laws.

## **Other points of interest**

1. How to get parents to be Marshalls – If be a marshal, than kids compete for free.
2. The USA-S Age Group Development Committee is discussing rules that would limit the number of swimmers that can be in a lane during meet warm-ups. According to statistics, 90% of incidents at a meet occur in warm-ups. In an effort to reduce these injuries, new rules are being considered to limit reduce lane crowding during meet warm-ups. For more information go to the USA-S website and review the Age Group Development Committee meeting minutes.
3. Pacific Northwest – clubs that run meets that violate the 4 hour rule, lose the right to host meets for 12 months.
4. Clubs should conduct workshops for coaches to teach proper techniques for dry land training. Intent is to help prevent chronic injuries.

Respectively Submitted  
John Ertter