



NHCP SWIM CLUB



NHCP Meet Safety Responsibilities

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Planning will reduce the number of potential risk exposures that are present in different environments, including practice sessions, meets and swim team related activities such as picnics and parties. A facilities safety inspection or walk-through is a great place to start planning for swim meet safety. Keep in mind that the facility might have its own safety inspection process and that should be included in the swim team planning process.

However, a swimming meet involves a large number of people with different perspectives toward the facility so the swim team should not assume that the facility will recognize some of the potential exposures. An inspection or walk-through will heighten awareness of potential problems such as broken equipment or crowded hallways so that warning signs or barriers can be posted. It is also possible that through daily exposure to a facility, some potential risks become so familiar to the staff that they are not noticed. Therefore, try to include a person in the walk-through who is not a daily facility user, because they will see the facility from a fresh perspective.

There are many ways to enhance your powers of observation and to broaden your own perspective regarding the facility. Look at it as if you are a swimmer, a parent, a coach or an official. Take a ten-year old with you on a walk-through and observe what areas attract their attention. Sit in the bleachers, look at the facility and write down what you see. Stand behind a starting block and observe the facility from a different angle.

Common sense and observation will go far toward developing a meet safety plan. Walk-through and note areas of concern, then focus on specifics. Write an action plan to ensure that such areas will be properly marked with appropriate signs or will be adequately secured. Ask questions such as, "How can we route traffic around this area?" After the initial inspection, write a checklist that can be used before the meet begins. USA Swimming has examples of safety checklists that can be adapted to meet the needs of individual clubs.

Following the guidelines listed below can facilitate this:

1. A committee composed of at least the meet director, the referee and the facility manager (lifeguard or host club safety person) should be appointed to inspect the venue for "unsafe" conditions or circumstances (e.g., locked exits, unsecured diving boards, protrusions or holes in the deck, slippery areas, overloaded electrical sockets in the hospitality area). The committee should correct these items as necessary. Hazards that cannot be eliminated should be clearly marked or blocked. Any person seeing an unsafe situation or activity within the venue of the swim meet should request the activity be stopped and report the situation to either the meet director or the referee for a permanent solution.
2. The local "venue" should be defined and all participating teams should be informed of which specific areas of the host facility are included in the venue. The venue should include the areas located on the sides and ends of the pool, all spectator areas (entrance and exit walkways), scoring and administration rooms, team areas (rub down, rest and stretching areas), locker rooms, rest rooms, hospitality and/or snack bar or concessions areas, as well as any specific areas designated by the host club or the meet director.



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3. Any special safety rules or guidelines particular to the host facility or venue should be posted (e.g., no admittance to toddler-wading pool for swimmers over eight years old, etc.).
4. The appropriate meet committee (see Chapter 3 of this handbook) should establish procedures to ensure that all swimmers, coaches, officials and workers are current members of USA Swimming.
5. USA Swimming policy requires warm-up procedures within each LSC and for all sanctioned meets. These guide lines and procedures, which are on file with the LSC general and safety chairs, require that: 1) the warm-up is marshaled and 2) racing starts not be allowed except as designated in sprint lanes. The warm-up and safety guidelines specific to the meet (six lanes versus eight lanes, etc.) should be posted prominently at several locations around the pool. The guidelines must be adhered to, with the referee having the authority to remove a swimmer/coach/club from the venue and meet for failure to conform.
6. Meet marshals must be selected for every meet and must be USA Swimming members. They should be responsible individuals who can actively monitor warm-ups and maintain order and safety in the swimming venue. They are assigned by and report to the Meet Director and/or Meet Referee. The marshal shall warn, order to cease and desist, or, with the concurrence of the Referee, remove from the venue, anyone behaving in an unsafe manner or whose actions are disrupting the orderly conduct of the meet. To indicate their authority, marshals should be provided with an easily identifiable uniform clearly visible to all in the venue. Bright orange vests or armbands, or other brightly colored means of identification can be used.