



**Operational Risk**  
**Director Handbook**  
(formally known as Safety Director)

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## **Introduction**

Safety covers all aspects of our sport. From the trip to the pool, to drying off in the locker room, to avoiding the human predators who prey on children, these are safety issues and sound risk management practices that must be in place. Obviously, the Operational Risk Director cannot be in all places at all times. A major part of safety is raising the safety awareness of the people in our sport. If everyone looks out for safety, we will be close to achieving our personal goal, allowing our athletes to perform without substantial risk of harm.

Most of our athletes are young. They are not of legal age to consent to risk, nor are they aware of all of the consequences of risky behavior. As adults we have a high goal of protecting the athlete from risks and dangers. All of us at Middle Atlantic Swimming must be dedicated to the goal of athlete fitness and safety. A few conscientious coaches and volunteers will not alleviate risks if others overlook their responsibilities. No other goal can be above the safety of swimmers, coaches, officials, and meet volunteers. While we cannot prevent all injuries from occurring, the Operational Risk Director must be instrumental in providing a safe environment. Concerns over times, meet profit, personal loyalty and team success cannot supersede safety.

This handbook has been developed to assist you in understanding your role as Operational Risk Director. While this training guide will give you a basic understanding of the role and importance of the Operational Risk Director, with Middle Atlantic Swimming and USA Swimming, you will gain additional expertise and confidence while working on deck at various sizes of meets. It is expected that after you carefully read this guide, an online exam available on [maswim.org](http://maswim.org) must be taken for full credentials as your club's Operational Risk Director. The test will be graded automatically and you will be notified immediately of the results.

## **Certification Requirements**

- Current USA Swimming non-athlete registration, including up to date background checks and athlete protection training
- Shadow a currently certified Middle Atlantic Operational Risk Director at 4 sessions, no more than 2 at the same meet, two sessions must be 12 and under sessions and sessions must be a 13 and over sessions.
- Submit signed Operational Risk Director Training form to the MA Director of Competition
- Complete the MA Operational Risk Director on line Test with a minimum score of 80%
- Attend an Operational Risk Director on-line Workshop
- Middle Atlantic Operational Risk Certifications need to be renewed every 2 years

## **Job Description**

The Operational Risk Director is a meet official whose responsibility is to enforce warm-up procedures and maintain order at the swimming venue. They have the full authority to warn or order to cease and desist with the help and concurrence of the Meet Referee and Meet Director to remove or have removed from the swimming venue anyone with objectionable behavior. This can include behaving in an unsafe manner, using profane or abusive language, bullying, or actions that can disrupt the orderly conduct of the meet.

It is required that the Operational Risk Director is a registered non-athlete member of USA Swimming that has completed the USA Swimming background check, athlete protection training and must be

affiliated with a Middle Atlantic Swimming club or approved by the Middle Atlantic General Chair and/or Safety Chair. The Operational Risk Director shall also make contact with the LSC Operational Risk Chair and make any reports requested by the LSC Operational Risk Chair and/or USA Swimming.

Each club has a legal obligation that, if it desires to remain in good standing within USA Swimming and Middle Atlantic Swimming, it must comply within its rules and regulations of USA Swimming. These rules relate to the proper registration of coaches, compliance with the membership requirements of all non-athlete members pertaining to the meet management staff, implementation of safety protocols, and other obligations as set forth in the rules and regulations of USA Swimming. In particular, note that all athletes and all coaches must be USA Swimming members.

Each meet session should have a certified Operational Risk Director on deck, plus a minimum of 2 meet marshals (one male and one female). For Prelim/Final meets, a minimum of 4 meet marshals per session is needed. A gender division required but does not need to be equitable. While a Operational Risk Director could be a Meet Director, meet marshals CANNOT be coaches or meet directors. To be a fully credentialed Operational Risk Director, you must be approved by the LSC before you can be on deck in that capacity. The Operational Risk Director must sign in at the official's table. Cell phones should not be carried by the Operational Risk Director on deck. If a cell phone is needed for business or other emergency purpose it must be on silent or vibrate. Personal calls must not be taken or made while on deck serving as the Operational Risk Director.

The Operational Risk Director will have the ability to work with and/or appoint meet marshals to help carry out the safety conduct of the meet (See rule 102.19 on the USA Swimming Rulebook). The Operational Risk Director and the meet marshals are required to wear identifying attire such as a hat, vest, lanyard, and/or ID. The Operational Risk Director and the meet marshals should be friendly and have a smile on their face as they walk throughout the pool venue. You are a representative of the club and also the sport of swimming. Besides being in charge of safety you are a customer service representative as well.

### **Parking Areas**

Check to see if the facility that the venue is at requires you to staff for parking attendants. Each one of the parking attendants should have a flashlight or something that will draw attention to themselves. Use safety cones or other types of equipment to block off areas where vehicles should not pass through or park. Have multiple parking attendants working the same area. Remind all parking attendants to stay alert.

### **Facility and Emergency Planning**

Safety Action Plans (SAPs) should be in place for each pool, based on identified risks for that facility that includes protocol for a facility emergency, weather emergency, fire, chemical emergency, drowning incident, spinal management, emergency incident, and calling 911. Ask to see the plans before the start of warm-up. If the pool is managed by lifeguards, they should have the plan available. You may also ask for a copy of them from the Meet Director prior to the start of meet.

The plan should also include the name or position of the person on deck that is responsible for activating the Safety Action Plan. In case of an emergency, all directives will come from facility

management, the Meet Referee or the Meet Director. The meet announcer will be instructed to make public announcements with instructions and updates. Based on the degree of the emergency, the pool area, building or both will be evacuated under the direction of the lifeguards, meet personnel and/or emergency personnel.

The Operational Risk Director should also be involved or aware of every accident involving any of the club's facilities or with any attending swimmers, coaches, officials, meet volunteers and their families at the hosting venue. This person shall also work with any accident or incident at the venue in conjunction with the meet management and facility staff.

#### *Why have a plan?*

This planning is also extremely important in the event of legal action. A proactive program shows intent, and serves as a deterrent to legal action, but also acts as evidence of responsible care. Other benefits include: increased safety for all participants, reduced losses to USA Swimming, high appeal of swimming to potential participants, and the easier monitoring of claims, losses and insurance coverage. Not to mention the decreased liability in the club and facility who has done their due diligence throughout the entire process.

#### *Who is responsible for the plan?*

Middle Atlantic Swimming and its Operational Risk Chair play a vital role in safety. Their involvement comes in different ways, but contact with each other determines the overall success of the safety program. To be effective, all coaches, the Operational Risk Director, meet director, meet referee and the safety marshals are required to address safety where events are held. To ensure that all swimmers are aware of the concerns for their safety, it is recommended that you also seek their input. Encourage swimmers to discuss any area they perceive to be a problem so immediate corrective steps can be taken.

#### *How do I develop a plan?*

An effective safety program should contain procedures in prevention, safety inspections, and safety meetings, proper care of the victim or affected individuals, and the supervision of the facility. Every type of emergency that could occur should be considered when planning for emergencies. A detailed plan should be put in writing and thoroughly reviewed and practiced by all members involved. The following points should be considered when developing a plan:

#### *Safety Rules and Regulations:*

You can assist in the safe operation of a meet by establishing and adhering to rules and regulations. Facility and USA Swimming policies are designed to minimize the risk of injury. Assemble all the safety rules and regulations pertaining to the facility and USA Swimming. Review all rules and regulations and the procedures used to enforce them. Post and/or publish appropriate rules and procedures, e.g., warm-up procedures. Review the facility's signage, including directional and warning, to see if it is adequate and meets current regulations. Some facilities are more vigilant and forthcoming of certain rules than other facilities, so be sure to communicate that frequently.

#### *Supervision:*

Supervision provides the highest level of service, using only qualified leaders and volunteers in accord with the best standard of care possible. Coaches and meet marshals should be active in enforcing rules

and regulations, such as the warm-up procedures. The Operational Risk Director can act as liaison between the club and facility manager in developing such plans. Continual communication between individuals will result in quality meet operations.

#### *Safety Inspections:*

The first step toward actively preventing injuries is to recognize potential hazards. This requires a systematic method of inspecting the swimming facility. First, determine what is to be inspected. Then, develop a series of checklists and establish a method of reporting faulty equipment or facility problems. Follow up on its repair or replacement and be sure to remove or rope off any faulty equipment or dangerous areas at the end of the meet.

#### *Emergency Procedures:*

It is important to construct a general plan that will help you handle emergencies. The key components of the plan will include:

- Communication System: How will you get the attention of others during an emergency? Where is the phone located? What numbers do you call?
- Rescue Equipment: Is rescue equipment easily accessible? Does everyone know how to use it? Is it adequate to meet the needs for the event being held?
- Accessibility of the Facility: Plan how the rescue personnel can enter the pool facility most quickly. If there is a locked gate, who has the keys?
- Emergency Support Personnel: Who is expected to respond to an emergency? Have they been trained in CPR, First Aid, and Emergency Water Safety (Safety Training for Swim Coaches) skills?

#### ***Incident Reporting:***

In the event of an accident or incident, the Operational Risk Director is in charge of completing the online Report of Occurrence form to USA Swimming. The URL for the Report of Occurrence is at the following: <https://fs22.formsite.com/usaswimming/form18/index.html> It can also be found on the maswim.org website under the Admin tab and after selecting Operational Risk Directors.

#### *Operational Risk Director Checklist (Prior to the meet):*

- A) Review the venue. An evaluation needs to focus on areas with potential problems.
- B) In writing, describe these areas and specifically address preventive measures.
- C) Assure that signs are posted for special attention to NO SMOKING and NO GLASS.
- D) Discuss where marshals will be needed and what the areas of concern are.
- E) Establish warm-up procedures.
- F) Establish a communication center where emergency phone calls are made.
- G) Important numbers, including coaching contacts, must be updated and available.

#### **Warm-Up Guidelines**

If you have questions about the warm up procedures, talk to the Meet Referee or Meet Director on arrival. It is the responsibility of the Operational Risk Director to assign the following:

- 2 meet marshals per warm up pool
- Divide each pool into two L shapes and each meet marshal shall be responsible for one of the L's
- One L will include the side where the starting blocks are located as well as a connecting side

- The other L will include the turn side of the pool as well as a connecting side
- The designated safety personnel shall stand at a corner end, near the start or turn end of the pool

All swimmers must enter feet first into the warm up pool (unless start lanes have been opened). Circle swimming must always happen in the lanes. Training equipment and toys are not allowed during warm-ups. Coaches cannot do a drill or a warm-up set that prevents others from using that lane. Coaches can't take over lanes for their sole use during warm-up. Remind swimmers that there is to be no running on deck. Report to the Meet Referee any unsafe areas on deck, including loose wires, slippery areas, loose blocks or too many swimmers in a lane. Be alert for electronic equipment cords/pad cords/buttons etc. that may fall into the pool during warm-up. Swimmers are to exit the pool upon completion of warm-ups.

Each warm-up period is divided into two sessions. But, some meets may pre-assign warm up times and lanes. If that is the rule for that meet, this must be posted throughout the pool area.

- General warm-up occurs during the first 20-45 minutes. No sprinting or pace work is to be allowed during the general warm up session. All lanes are open for general circle swim warm-up. It is imperative that general warm up swimmers be cleared from the lanes before dive/starts are allowed to begin
- Specific Warm-Up also known as Dive-Starts occurs in the last 10 minutes. The outside lanes are push/pull lanes. Push lanes are used for pace work and the swimmer will push off and swim one or two lengths at the direction of the coach. Generally lanes 2 & 7 are the dive sprint lanes, but can be modified according to the meet referee. You must monitor the need for additional start lanes and additional lanes can be open for dive/sprints upon request of the coach to the meet referee. The swimmers start from the starting blocks and swim down that lane and return in the next lane or get out at the end of the lane and walk back around. If a swimmer is performing a backstroke start, another swimmer may not be on the starting block at the same time.

Open the push/pace and start lanes at the time the Meet Referee designates. When these lanes are opened it must be announced overhead on the PA system. You may need to make these announcements several times. A deck official or the meet announcer may assist you with this. Swimmers and coaches who refuse to follow the warm-up procedures may be removed from the deck for the remainder of the warm up session by the Operational Risk Directors.

## **General Rules to Enforce**

### *Credentials*

Generally speaking, the only people on deck should be swimmers, coaches, meet volunteers and meet officials. Everyone must be accounted for whether they are athletes, non-athletes, or parent volunteers.

A meet recon showing the validity of a coach's credentials is emailed to the meet director prior to every meet. MA Swimming will assist in notifying the clubs attending the meet by verifying the credentials of all coaches on staff. Regardless of which coach is to be on deck, all coaches listed for the club must be

current on all certifications, registration, APT and BC for club practices as well.

Everyone who is allowed to be on deck for that particular club is listed. Thus, upon entering the venue for any swim meet, coaches must be able to show a picture ID with their credentials and/or their Deck Pass.

Once on deck, coaches and meet officials are required to have their USA Swimming credentials in immediately available at all times. If a coach or official cannot produce their credentials and begins to act belligerent and uncooperative, get their name, club affiliation and notify the Meet Referee and the Meet Director. Do not try to stop them, let the meet administration handle the situation

#### *Parent Volunteers*

Badges and/or lanyards must be provided to all volunteers who are on deck during any session in the meet. Additionally, a list of all volunteers, pre session, must be available with the Safety and/or Meet Director.

The responsibility of background checks for parent volunteers falls on the club hosting the meet. The venue, whether it is a school district, university, or any other aquatics facility may have specific requirements for volunteers. Clubs must research this to prevent a situation from happening and should be compliant with all state and federal laws pertinent to the well-being of children in our athletic competitions. To prevent issues, clubs should be selling the importance background checks to parents as a way to help this in the future.

#### **Before the Session and the Meet**

The Operational Risk Director and the assigned meet marshals should arrive at the meet at least 15 minutes prior to the meet warm-up and check in with the Meet Referee. Being early helps to acquaint you with the setup for the meet. Locate the first aid station and the emergency action plan (If there is no EAP notify the Meet Referee). The meet warm-up should not start until the Operational Risk Director, meet marshals, and the Meet Referee are on deck and the Meet Referee provides instructions to open the pool for warm-up. The Operational Risk Director and the meet marshals should also be available for time-trials.

#### **During the Meet and Warm-Ups**

The Operational Risk Director must appoint meet marshals to be focused on the warm-up/cool-down pool at all times. There should be at least 1 person responsible (preferably 2) at the warm-up/cool-down pool (each will be responsible for an 'L' area coverage and should be based on opposite corners of the pool). Other safety personnel may patrol the locker rooms and pool venue looking for safety issues. Once the meet has started, take turns with short breaks and start rotating positions. Rotating positions frequently keeps everyone alert. However, never leave the warm-up/cool-down pool unattended when rotating positions. Do not walk together (unless a specific inspection requires a witness). Never have your back to the pool. You may meet and discuss issues or concerns but face the pool at all times.

Coaches must provide documentation and have it on record with the meet director that all swimmers entered into the meet have been certified to perform deep water dives. This is a preventative measure to make sure that the athlete is protected in case an accident occurs. This should be emphasized

because venues and aquatic facilities have variable depths. Just because an athlete knows how to dive in 13 feet of water, does not mean they can perform a safe start in 6 feet of water.

Report issues or potential issues that cannot be immediately resolved to the Meet Referee. During smaller meets with only 2 safety personnel, the meet marshal should notify the Operational Risk Director if they need to leave the deck for a bathroom or hospitality break. If the Operational Risk Director needs to leave the deck, they must tell the meet referee.

If a swimmer is not entered into the meet, they may not use the warm-down pool or any other part of the pool at the facility, especially any recreation or wading pool areas. Diving boards are never to be used during a swimming meet. The following is not allowed at any time:

- Glass is not allowed on deck or in the locker rooms at any time.
- Alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs are not allowed anywhere
- Smoking, smokeless tobacco, and E-Cigs are not allowed on the premises at any time.
- Smokers must be at least twenty feet from any doorway or entrances to the pool facility or in some cases a public sidewalk off the premises.

Cameras or cell phones are not allowed to be used in the locker rooms, including meet personnel, coaches, and officials. If you see anyone taking pictures, selfies or possibly videotaping in the locker rooms, with their phones or other video recording devices, you are to take the person to the Meet Referee and Meet Director immediately. If the person refuses to go with you, do not leave the person alone in the locker room. Ask a nearby bystander to go to the timing table and get the Meet Referee or the Meet Director to come to the locker room. Under no circumstances do you physically touch the person in question.

Phones or any device used to take video or pictures are not allowed behind the starting blocks at any MA sanctioned event. This goes for all parent volunteers, coaches, officials, and swimmers.

Additionally, if you notice an unauthorized or suspicious person or people, do not ignore the situation. Report the activity to the Meet Referee and/or the Meet Director. Adults, including parents and meet officials, should not be loitering in the locker rooms. If you notice that someone is, please ask them to leave. If that person refuses to leave, ask a bystander to notify the Meet Referee and/or Meet Director immediately. That person should be removed from the premises. You should be assisted and directed by the Meet Referee and/or the Meet Director if the police was notified and if the person was removed from the facility.

Horse playing and rough housing is prohibited. This tends to occur most often during warm-ups and cool-down. Swimmers may not play leap frog, drag each other through the water, throw one another in the air, or play keep away with goggles or anything else. Politely remind the swimmers that the purpose of the warm-up/cool-down is to warm-up and cool-down. You may not physically restrain a swimmer from doing an activity that is unsafe. Ask the swimmer to stop and escort them to their coach. You may warn them and if they don't stop, contact the Meet Referee; they can be removed from that location or from the meet.

Running/Sliding/Skateboarding is always prohibited. Ask the person not to run, slide or skateboard on

deck (Swimmers are the worst offenders- especially if late for their event). Sneakers that have wheels on them are prohibited on deck.

Swimming under the bulkhead is extremely dangerous. When under the bulkhead, the swimmer is hidden from view and they can get caught underneath and not be able to get free and can drown. Swimmers are allowed one warning and if they continue they should be removed from the venue (with concurrence of the Meet Referee). Only meet officials and lifeguards may walk on the bulkhead. There should be a lane line to prevent swimmers from swimming directly next to the bulkhead.

Observe the pool deck for plastic bottles or other trash that can be knocked into the pool or tripped over. Be diligent on picking up trash and throw it away. Advise any swimmers or coaches that are nearby to keep their area clean of litter.

Rude and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. This may include, but not limited to profanity, even if not directed at any meet officials. Be proactive by telling others that profane language should not be used.

No open fire of any sort is allowed in the hospitality area or on the pool deck without prior MA Swimming permission. Be alert for propane or electric heaters or cooling units that may be brought on deck or be placed inside tents on deck. In tight quarters heaters may be a safety hazard by causing a fire or carbon monoxide poisoning. Cooling units/fans or heating units may cause tripping hazards with the cords. Large heating or cooling units should be pre-approved by the meet director based on power availability at the meet. Cords should be covered with tape, a rug, or other cord protector to reduce tripping and should always be away from the water.

Any hazards in locker rooms, on the deck area or in areas used by coaches, swimmer, spectators or officials should be removed or clearly marked. Anyone who does not obey the warnings of the Operational Risk Director is subject to being ejected from the facility. When repeated warnings are ignored, the Operational Risk Director should find the Meet Referee who will then speak with the swimmer's coach or direct the Meet Director to eject the offender from the meet venue.

When available and accessible, coaches, officials, and meet volunteers should be using separate restroom facilities from the athletes. This also includes using a separate access to the deck that does not enter via the locker rooms.

### **Crowd Control**

Always keep calm and listen attentively. If someone is causing a disruption or you think they will have to potential to cause a disruption escort them to an area away from everyone else to discuss the issue in private. Answer questions carefully and make sure your answers are consistent with the established rules. Give the person options that are consistent with the established rules in solving the situation. If someone has a problem with a particular rule, explain how to properly get the issue resolved.

Remember you are not a POLICE officer. Never use inappropriate language or raising your voice. Remember some people will not agree with your decision or remedy. Thus, allow the person to express their opinion in a private area of the facility. Never be in a room alone with a disruptive or potentially violent person. If someone becomes violent GET AWAY FROM THE SITUATION and call the police. Never

touch anyone, it may escalate things more.

### **After the Session and the Meet**

At the conclusion of the meet or session, continue to walk the deck, locker rooms, and warm-down pool looking for safety concerns. Swimmers may still be warming down from their final race so the pool still needs to be watched. You must remain on deck for at least 15 minutes and until released by the Meet Referee. Always report off to the Meet Referee and Meet Director before leaving the venue.

### **First-Aid**

#### *Pool Specific First-Aid Kit*

A well-stocked first-aid kit, kept in easy reach, is a necessity in every facility. It is not difficult to put together a good first aid kit if you use a step by step approach. The items will fit into several categories (see below). You don't need a fancy container for your first-aid items – just make sure you will be able to find what you need without tearing the whole thing apart. Also, build into your step by step approach, a plan to restock the first-aid kit on a regular basis. When deciding which products to put in your kit, think about where and how it will be used and by whom. Protecting yourself first is very important so the first item in your kit should be latex or vinyl gloves. Items to stock are:

- sterile gauze (pads and roller)
- tape (adhesive, paper, plastic, etc.)
- adhesive bandages in several sizes
- elastic bandage
- butterfly bandages
- antiseptic wipes
- antibiotic cream
- antiseptic solution
- disposable instant ice packs
- plastic gloves
- mouthpiece for administering CPR
- blanket
- glucose tube
- tweezers
- scissors
- eye wash
- triangular bandage
- burn spray
- tongue depressors (can be used as splints for fingers)
- flashlight

#### *Injuries*

If someone is hurt (wants ice or a Band-Aid or need first aid) notify first the lifeguard (if present) and then the Meet Director. If an ambulance is needed, the lifeguard or Operational Risk Director should call 911. If your assistance is not required in the area of the injury continue to assist in the meet. The Meet Director may ask you to assist with emergency procedures such as crowd control or to wait for the ambulance. Take emergency instructions from the Meet Director, but notify the Meet Referee if you need to leave your Operational Risk Director duties temporarily.

### *Blood/Body Fluids*

Aggressive treatment of open wounds or skin lesions should be followed. In particular, whenever a swimmer or any other person suffers a laceration or wound where oozing or bleeding occurs, the competition will be stopped at the earliest possible time and the swimmer or person should leave the pool or area and be given appropriate medical treatment. When it is deemed necessary by the meet referee (or his or her appointed person) a swimmer or any other person at a USA Swimming meet may be disqualified from further competition if bleeding or oozing cannot be controlled or wound covered appropriately.

Any blood, vomit, urine, or other excrement should be removed from the deck or locker room immediately. Notify the facility host for clean-up. Prevent others from accidentally stepping in the substance. If the substance prevents swimmers from safely entering or exiting the competition pool, the meet should be delayed until clean up can be accomplished. Notify the Meet Referee and Meet Director of the incident. It is not the responsibility of the Operational Risk Director to complete the cleanup process. They are there to protect others from exposure. Contaminated areas should be cleaned with a diluted bleach solution after removal of the substance. Individuals doing the cleanup should wear gloves and other personal protective equipment as needed.

### **Conclusion**

The Operational Risk Director has an important role in keeping the swimming venue safe for everyone. Maintain frequent communication with the Meet Referee as well as the Meet Director as you walk throughout the pool venue. Your eyes must always be on the lookout for unsafe actions at all times. The Meet Referee can direct the Meet Director to assist you and remove people from the deck if needed, though this does not happen very often but it can occur. By keeping a friendly, positive outlook while maintaining a safe environment, shows everyone that you want them to have a safe and fun time while at the meet.

Education does not stop here. Always be proactive and try to assist other teams as the Operational Risk Director when attending their meets, just as a meet or admin official would. Everyone learns from experience and serving as the Operational Risk Director is no different. This is in addition to the MA requirement that the person looking to serve as the Operational Risk Director must shadow other Operational Risk Directors for two sessions prior to MA certification.