

“Safety At Swim Meets”
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Introduction

Some Facts About Pacific Swimming (That Probably Never Occurred To You)

- With 13,900 swimmers, PC is 2nd largest of 59 LSCs (CA is largest; IL is close 3rd)—and the number of swimmers keeps on rising
- In 2001, PC conducted some 115 sanctioned meets (109 in 2000)
- Meets are held year-round, mostly out-of-doors, rain or shine
- PC swimmers are exposed to variety of risks, especially at swim meets (where 50% of reported injuries occur)
- While most accidents occur in the immediate area of the pool, many happen outside the fence

***Our Kids Have Plenty of Opportunities To Get Hurt ...
That's Why This Is So Important!***

Promoting Swimmer Safety—Keys to Creating A Safe Environment

- Awareness—Keeping safety foremost in mind
- Vigilance—Knowing what's going on at all times
- Enforcement—Apprehending and taking corrective action

Awareness—Promoting A Safe Environment

Accidents Can Be Avoided

- If swimmers are aware of risks, chances are they will consciously avoid danger ... after all, they don't want to get hurt
- If obvious risks are recognized and mitigated, or removed altogether, safety is promoted
- It's always best to establish a safe environment first ... chances are good nothing unfortunate will happen later

Coaches Have A Huge Role To Play

- Kids don't always listen and they quickly forget ... so coaches must continually remind swimmers of safe practices
- Coaches must honor established rules and procedures—insist on compliance
- Senior swimmers are role models for the younger ones—monkey see, monkey do; coaches might consider leaning on the older ones to get the safety message across to the younger ones
- Set good personal example ... at all times ... everyone.

Meet Management Has Major Responsibilities

- Removing or mitigating unsafe conditions—best done with facility operator
- Cordoning-off unsafe areas is easy and cheap—should be done liberally
- Making people aware of any unsafe conditions—ensuring effective warning signs, caution tape, warning cones
- Ensuring effective marshaling crew ... more on them later

Officials—The “NO Guys”

- Most swimmers (and some coaches) will listen to an official, especially one who makes some sense and has swimmer safety paramount in mind
- Meet Referees might consider a “Safety Moment” as part of both officials meeting and coaches meeting.

Vigilance and Enforcement—Inseparable Keys To Safety

Marshals

Role—As provided in USA Swimming Rules and Regulations

- Enforce warm-up procedures and maintain order in the swimming venue
- Have full authority to order cease and desist unsafe acts and/or disorderly conduct
- With referee concurrence, have offenders removed from venue

Swimming Venue

- Area within sides and ends of pool, spectator areas, team areas, locker rooms
- Also includes adjacent areas used by the meet
- Any other areas designated by host club, facility operator, meet director and/or meet referee

Credentials

- Must be USS registered—can be done on deck w/o surcharge (that does apply to swimmers)
- Must be trained—at least know their duties (see Pacific Swimming website/Officials page for complete description; also USA Swimming website/Officials page)
- Serious meet directors might wish to have their marshals take the (light-hearted) test (also available on the Pac Swim website)

Head Marshal—What’s This Person Really Supposed To Do?

Reporting Relationships

- Designated by Meet Director, identified on meet sheet
- Reports to Meet Referee (Deck Referees)
- Responsible for all other marshals

Before The Meet—Yes, The Job Does Begin Early

- Recruit a crew of marshals to cover the assignments—remember, locker rooms need to be monitored, so a mix of men and women is needed.
- Make sure all marshals are members of USA Swimming; registration can be done on deck at meet time (no surcharge on the registration fee).
- Get a copy of the Pacific Swimming *Safety Guidelines and Warm-Up Procedures* — these are included in the Meet Director’s packets.
- Have a plan for the pool lane set up—which lanes are to be designated as general warm up, push pace, and race start; lane designations are established by the warm-up procedures, but can be modified by the Meet Referee.
- Meet with your crew of marshals for training, and ask the Meet Referee to join you.
- Schedule a venue walk-through a few days before the meet with the Facility Manager, the Meet Director, and the Head Lifeguard who is assigned to your meet.
- Have a safety checklist—go over it.
- Document concerns and recommend corrections before the start of the meet. Note anything broken at the facility, such as cracked windows. (Swim teams have been billed after a meet for repairing items that were broken or damaged before the meet.)
- Ensure that the whereabouts of first aid supplies are known, and that the location and contact details for the nearest paramedics and hospital are known.
- Let the Meet Referee know of any problems.

During Meet Set-up—Things No One Else Is Likely To Think About

- Make sure the supplies you will need are there: Traffic cones, lane designation signs (General Warm-up/Race Starts/Push Pace), rolls of yellow caution tape, duct tape, and distinctive marshal vests or other attire.

At the Meet—Here's Where The Job Gets Really Important

- Be at the pool 20-30 minutes before warm-ups open.
- Your marshals must be ready to work as soon as warm ups are scheduled to begin.
- Before the pool is open warm-ups:
 - Φ Post Pacific Swimming *Safety Guidelines and Warm-Up Procedures*
 - Φ Make sure lane designation signs are up—initially all lanes should be for General Warm Up.
- The Meet Referee will open the pool when marshals are on station and the pool is considered to be safe.
- Once the pool is open follow the Referee's instructions for lane use; if a coach asks for Push Pace and/or Race Start lanes, go ahead and make the lane designation changes according to the *Safety Guidelines and Warm-up Procedures*, or as instructed by the Meet Referee.
- Check with the Referee before any announcements are made. The Referee can modify the warm-up schedule if needed.
- During the meet be sure to check in with the Referee, let the Referee know your plan of rotation.
- Make sure any accidents are properly reported on a *Report of Occurrence* form.

Marshal Job Duties—What Everyone in a Distinctive Colored Vest Should Be Doing

- Be on time for your assignment.
- Observe the deck and around the starting blocks.
- Keep clear the areas where the swimmers need to walk—such as a route between the warm-up/warm-down pool and the starting blocks.
- Keep “non-swimming” swimmers and parents out of the timers view line *especially for starts and finishes*.
- Monitor the warm up lanes to assure swimmers can warm up and warm down; keep the swimmers moving; no diving, circle swimming only—the warm-up/warm-down lanes are not a place to visit and not a place to play.
- Is the deck safe—no running or horseplay that could cause injury?
- Are there glass containers being used by anyone on deck? If so, have the containers removed.
- Check locker rooms and bathrooms. Are they safe? Let the pool staff know about any supply problems you discover.

Officials

Meet Referee

- Establishes safety rules of the meet within the guidelines of Pacific Swimming and USA Swimming
- Has overall responsibility for safe conduct of meet
- Looks primarily to Head Marshal for enforcement

Deck Referee—The “Invigilator”

- During warm-up session, maintains watch over pool – ensure that the Warm-up Procedures and Safety Guidelines are being followed
- Represents Meet Referee—has complete delegated authority
- There should be an invigilator on each end (for LC) or on each course (for SC)

Stoke & Turn

- Must constantly and consistently enforce USA Swimming and Pacific Swimming safety rules and procedures
- Any carded USA Swimming official may be asked by Meet Referee (or Deck Ref) to assist with marshal’s duties as needed ... *it’s their job*.