

Safety Action Plan Information

Accidents seldom “just happen,” and many can be prevented. According to the National Safety Council, 85 percent of all accidents are preventable; accidents that might have occurred are prevented or reduced by those who develop and execute risk management programs.

WHY HAVE A PLAN?

Accidental injuries in sports may result in high dollar litigation, making attention to safety especially important. With a risk management plan, you take a proactive approach to managing accidents.

You project an attitude that says:

- We are knowledgeable professionals
- We are concerned for your safety
- We will do what is necessary to provide a safe environment

A risk management plan 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
- Easier monitoring of claims, losses and insurance coverage

Who Is Responsible for the Plan? There is an old adage that states, “Everyone’s responsibility is no one’s responsibility.” There is irony in that statement when it comes to risk management, because for such a plan to work, everyone in the organization needs to be involved. No program of this nature can be successful without the complete cooperation and understanding of all participants.

USA Swimming shows its commitment to safety and risk management in all areas of the organization. At the national level, USA Swimming has established the Operational Risk Committee, a standing committee. This committee’s role is to determine the best method to develop and monitor a risk management plan. Since this program began in 1984 as a task force, it has had a powerful impact

on policies and procedures adopted within USA Swimming. The Local Swimming Committee (LSC) and its Operational Risk/Safety Chair play a vital role in risk management planning and execution. The Operational Risk/Safety Chair generally has the most influence and control over habits and attitudes throughout the local area.

The Chair is responsible for providing leadership in coordinating training and distributing information to all member clubs, coaches and officials in the LSC. A strong leader in this position will spell success for the LSC's overall safety program. To further be effective, the coach, Club Safety Coordinator, Meet Director, Referee and Safety Marshals are required to address safety where events are held. Their involvement comes in different, but daily contact with each other and determines the overall success of the safety program.

To ensure that all swimmers are aware of the concerns for their safety, it is recommended that you seek their input. Encourage swimmers to discuss any area they perceive to be a problem so immediate corrective steps can be taken.

In situations where a club utilizes facilities that it does not own or control, it is essential that club acknowledges existing action plans. It must include appropriate representatives of the facility as part of developing emergency action procedures related to the club's use of that facility.

DEVELOPING THE PLAN

A risk management plan should contain procedures in prevention, proper care of the victim and 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 and could serve as a checklist in developing a plan:

- **Safety Rules & Regulations:** One can assist in the safe operation of the program 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.

- **Local Ordinances:** State or local ordinances should be checked. Facility standards, policies and procedures should be updated to coincide with all ordinances. This information can be obtained from health departments, police and fire department and local utility companies.
- **Chain of Command:** The chain of command or table of organization should be included so that all persons know and understand the lines and limits of authority and responsibility for their own position and those of others in the structure. This must be clearly understood by the coaches and all staff.
- **Training:** Currently USA Swimming requires that coaches be certified in Safety Training for Swim Coaches and CPR. This training should be encouraged to all participants. See [Coach Membership Requirements](#) for more information.
- **Record Keeping:** Past records of injuries and emergencies should be reviewed and analyzed. These records will give insight into the causes of previous injuries and the action that was taken by the staff during these situations. Conditions such as weather, number of swimmers, number of coaches on duty and any other influencing factors should be considered. Action plans should be established for the most common possible injuries. Quarterly accident reports are distributed to the LSC to aid in the chair's review and analysis of accidents.
- **Public Safety Personnel:** Public safety personnel should be consulted in the development of emergency plans. Police, fire and EMS personnel can provide valuable information about response times, lines and limits of authority, and the types of assistance that are available and that may be needed. Emergency personnel who are expected to respond to a call from a facility should be given clear directions on how to find and approach the facility. The directions to the facility should be posted by the telephone, enabling anyone to direct safety personnel to the facility. The participation of public safety personnel will help to establish a smooth transition for the victim and all of the staff who are involved in an emergency.
- **Communication System:** How will you get the attention of others during an emergency? Where is the phone located? What numbers do you call?
- **Emergency Procedures:** While a coach may be the first to respond to an emergency, lifeguards other coaches, and swimmers should have responsibilities in the event of an emergency. All appropriate staff, plus swimmers included in this plan, should rehearse the procedures at least once a

month. Included in this plan should be determining the wind direction for appropriate evacuation upwind from chlorine gas at an outdoor facility. Determination of wind direction by a quick glance at the backstroke flags will help in proper evacuation procedures. Repetition develops confidence and the likelihood that procedures will be conducted competently. Coaches must remember that in all cases their main responsibility is the safety of the swimmers. They must remain calm in all situations and do what they are trained to do.

- **Accessibility of the Facility:** Develop a plan for rescue personnel to enter the pool facility most quickly.
- **Rescue Equipment:** All rescue and first aid equipment should be inspected on a regular basis and should be easily accessible. Any piece of equipment that is not in good condition should be repaired or replaced immediately. Staff should be trained on the proper use of all equipment. Besides the facility, it is recommended that each club have their own first aid kit.
- **Equipment Replacement:** The facility management should make arrangements to replace all equipment and material used during an emergency as soon as possible. For example, if a victim has a suspected spinal injury and is transported to medical care on the facility's backboard, a second board should be available.
- **First Aid Area:** An area should be designated for first aid care for all victims of accident or illness. When there is no danger of causing further injury, victims should be moved to the First Aid area as soon as possible. The area should be as private as possible, with easy access for rescue personnel. The location of the First Aid area should be known to all staff and all personnel and equipment that will be used in this area should be specified so that there will be no confusion during an emergency. This area should have clear identification, such as "Emergency First Aid Room."
- **Reports and Records:** All injuries and rescues should be reported in writing. A system of records and reports should be developed, and every coach and lifeguard should be thoroughly trained in the proper procedures for filling out and filing occurrence reports. USA Swimming requires that incidents be reported via the online Report of Occurrence form for accidents occurring during all meets, practices, or club functions.
- **Spokesperson:** In case of emergency, the owner/operator of an aquatic facility should designate a mature individual to be responsible for informing the victim's relatives and for providing information and news releases. This

helps eliminate the possibility of misinformation about an injury to the swimmer or the cause of the accident.

SAMPLE PLANS

The link below provides sample Safety Action Plans for a variety of circumstances and situations. Our sincere thanks to the University of Minnesota aquatics program for allowing us to share this information.

DISCLAIMER

USA Swimming, is now, as it always has been, concerned for the safety of its members. It will continue to disseminate such information concerning safety as comes to its attention. However, USA Swimming cannot and does not accept responsibility for the content of any information or material not authored by USA Swimming.

The information and safety suggestions contained in this publication have been compiled from sources deemed to be reliable at the time of publication and may assist in increasing safety awareness with regard to the subject. However, each individual must make individual decisions and be responsible for their own actions and safety. Be aware that other or additional safety measures may be required under particular circumstances.