

North Carolina Safety Program for Pool Competitions and Practices

To ensure the security and well-being of our athletes, coaches, volunteers, and spectators, NCS has developed the following guidelines for providing a safe environment for practices and competitions. These guidelines are in addition to all USA Swimming rules and guidelines for athlete safety and protection and are intended to reinforce those rules and guidelines, not usurp them.

1. Club coaches will be aware of all requirements for proper athlete registration and coach certification as well as the regulations regarding practices with unregistered athletes to ensure full insurance coverage for the USA Swimming member athletes and coaches and the club.
2. Meet directors will ensure that unregistered athletes, coaches, and officials do not participate in any USA Swimming sanctioned meet.
3. Properly certified USA Swimming coaches shall supervise their athletes at all times during practices, warm up sessions, and competitions. The ratio of certified coaches to athletes should be reasonable to provide acceptable supervision. Lifeguards are recommended during practices and meets, especially if the coach/athlete ratio is low.
4. Coaches should instruct their athletes on safety procedures and proper behavior to ensure a safe environment for all. Coaches should advise staff, swimmers and parents of any safety concerns at practice facilities—such as busy swimmer drop off areas or slippery floors-- and put in place procedures to minimize the risk of injury to athletes and others.
5. Deck access during practices and meets should be limited to USA Swimming members and authorized meet volunteers as possible.
6. Coaches should ensure that all equipment used during meets and practices, including non-pool training activities such as dry land, is in good working order and that the water, pool deck, and other training spaces are free from any hazards.
 - Backstroke flags should be in proper position during practices where backstroke sets are conducted and during all meets and warm up sessions.
 - Lane lines that conform to USA Swimming rule 103.14 should be in place during practices and meets. Dividers should be inspected periodically to ensure that broken pieces do not pose a hazard to swimmers. Lane lines should be in place on the outside of the outermost lanes, especially if the pool wall is not continuous and a protruding corner presents a collision danger to swimmers.
 - Starting blocks should conform to USA Swimming rule 103.13 and be in good condition with non-slip surfaces and with no protruding parts that could pose a laceration hazard to swimmers. Starting blocks should be

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firmly attached to the deck and stable when swimmers mount and stand on the block.

- Electrical safety protocol should be followed at all times.
 - Water clarity and quality should meet minimum standards set by the municipality or pool operators. Coaches should exercise good judgment to protect athletes in all situations where regulations are unclear or unknown.
7. An athlete should disclose to the head coach any health conditions that may potentially impact his safety on deck or in the pool such as cardiac conditions, epilepsy, diabetes, asthma, etc. Other coaches in the club who may be supervising the athlete during practice or at meets should be made aware of the condition and any recommended responses but should hold the information in confidence out of respect for the swimmer's privacy.
 8. During practices and warm ups, swimmers will enter the pool feet first.
 - Diving, either from the side or blocks is not permitted except under the conditions provided for One-Way Dive Lanes (see below) where swimmers are prevented from swimming toward the starting end at any time. The only exception is during relay exchange practice under close coach supervision.
 - Only swimmers who have been properly instructed and certified for racing starts should be permitted to dive from blocks at any time, and then only into water depth of 4 feet or more as required in USAS rule 103.2.3.
 - Only one swimmer should stand on a block at a time.
 - When swimmers are practicing backstroke starts, no other swimmers should be on top of the block.
 9. Swimmers per lane should be kept at a reasonable number to provide adequate space between swimmers and to avoid collisions.
 10. Meet Management will determine reasonable warm up lane assignments based on entries and communicate these to coaches prior to the start of warm ups.
 - The meet sanction should include reference to warm up procedures. If specific warm ups are to be used they should be detailed in the meet announcement. The following lane designations are customary:
 - Pace Lanes: Usually the two outside lanes are designated as pace lanes.
 - One-Way Dive Lanes: Usually the inside lanes adjacent to the Pace Lanes are designated as Dive Lanes. Diving and backstroke starts are not permitted to begin until the lane has been cleared of general warm up swimmers. General warm up swimmers should respond promptly to

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Meet Management or officials' requests to clear the lane. Once starts begin, swimmers are not permitted to swim back toward the blocks at any time.

- The remaining lanes usually remain open for general warm up.
 - In lanes where continuous warm up/warm down is provided during meets, head first entry is prohibited at all times.
 - Meet Management will provide advance notice when the specific warm ups will begin and announce the activities that are permitted in each lane during the specific warm up period.
 - During the general warm up session, athletes will enter the pool feet first from the start end only.
 - The referee has authority to change warm up lane designations based on pool conditions or lane capacity or to better meet the swimmers' requirements.
 - If specific warm up procedures are not used at a meet, coaches are responsible for conducting safe warm ups in their assigned lanes. Dive starts may occur assuming that all other teams sharing the lane are in agreement and that the safety standards for One-Way Dive Lanes as outlined above are observed.
 - If lanes are crowded, coaches should prohibit the use of paddles or fins or other equipment that could injure or interfere with other swimmers. The meet announcement may state that equipment may not be used during warm up if capacity is a concern. The referee may also prohibit equipment use in all lanes based on the pool conditions.
 - The General Meeting shall not take place during warm ups to ensure athletes are supervised.
 - Warm ups should end no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the scheduled starting time of the session. Swimmers should respond promptly to requests to clear the pool at the end of the warm up period.
11. When dive overs or fly over starts are used during competition, coaches should instruct swimmers to move close to the wall and to the side of the block upon completing their races and not exit the pool until after the start of the next heat or until they are instructed to do so. Swimmers in the water should refrain from moving or making loud noises that could distract the swimmers on the block. Referees and starters will refrain from starting a new heat if swimmers in the water are not in safe positions.
12. Once swimmers have mounted the starting blocks, referees should reserve the step down command for situations where it is absolutely required such as when

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- conditions indicate that swimmers are safer off the blocks than remaining on the blocks, when a long delay is anticipated, or when a fair start cannot be executed without the command. The step down command should not be used as an instructional tactic. If the step down command is issued, swimmers should step down carefully to avoid falls and other injuries.
13. Swimmers and coaches will comply with all posted rules and regulations at practice and competition facilities and any additional facility requirements set forth in the meet announcement.
 14. Practice facility and meet facility changing rooms, locker rooms, and bathrooms should have signage indicating that recording and photographic devices of any kind including cell phones are prohibited. Coaches and officials should ensure that photographic devices are prohibited behind starting blocks and any other situation where athletes may be in vulnerable positions.
 15. Meet Management will appoint Meet Marshals who will ensure that safety procedures are followed during meets.
 16. No glass is allowed on deck or in the locker rooms or bathrooms during any practice or competition.
 17. There will be no smoking, alcohol consumption, or use of illegal drugs by any person at a practice or competition or any team function where athletes are present.
 18. Swimmers and coaches will comply with all hazardous weather instructions as issued by the municipality or pool operators. Good judgment should be exercised where regulations do not exist or are unclear to ensure the safety of the athletes and everyone else.
 19. At outdoor meets, adequate shade and hydration should be provided for athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers. Sunscreen use should be strongly encouraged.
 20. Space heaters and generators should not be used in indoor facilities or in tents at outdoor facilities to avoid exhaust fumes and fire and burning hazards.
 21. When injuries occur at meets, they will be documented immediately and reported in a timely manner :
 - Meet Directors are responsible for completing the USA Swimming Report of Occurrence form (available on the NCSwim.org and USASwimming.org websites) and should do so prior to the conclusion of the meet.
 - Meet Referees should be made aware of all injuries and should sign the form as “Activity Supervisor”.
 - Meet Directors should sign the form as “Report Submitted By” and file the form in triplicate as indicated at the bottom of the form.

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- A copy of the completed form should be provided to the injured party and a copy should be filed in the meet record.
- When injuries occur at out-of-LSC meets, the injured party's coach should request a copy to file with the NCS Safety Chair.
- When injuries occur at practices or other club functions, the senior coach is responsible for documenting and reporting according to the procedure stated above.

For more information or questions, contact the NCS Safety Chair (see www.SwimNC.com for contact information.)