USMS Open Water Guide to Operations

Part 2: Open Water Safety Guidelines

Revision Date: January 2016

**Addendum D: Coaches and Safety Directors Checklist—OW Training**

Below is a suggested checklist to guide preparation for open water training.

## Basic Information

Name of Group: Group Name.

Body of Water: Click to enter location. City, State: Click to enter city, State.

Dates: Start Date through End Date

Head Coach: Head coach name Phone: 000-000-0000 E-mail: Click to enter e-mail address

Safety Monitor: Safety monitor name. Phone: 000-000-0000 E-mail: Click to enter e-mail address

On-Site Coach: If not head coach. Phone: 000-000-0000 E-mail: Click to enter e-mail address

## Before the Swim

1. Visit the site to make sure it is appropriate and verify you have a good cell phone signal
2. Ensure venue meets any water quality requirements
3. If applicable, contact the venue administrator to get permission or permits for your swim
4. Enlist someone responsible for swimmer safety and work with that person to develop a safety plan
5. Ensure that all participants understand the potential risks associated with open water swimming and that all have the ability to participate safely
6. Check the typical weather and water conditions of the selected venue to know what to expect
7. Based on expected conditions, notify participants about additional items to bring (e.g. wetsuit for cold swim, extra hydration for hot swim, sunscreen for sunny swim…)
8. Get brightly colored swim caps for all swimmers
9. Get each participant's emergency contact information
10. Know the location of emergency assistance (hospital, urgent care)

## Day of the Swim

1. Arrive at venue early
2. Have onsite working phones (and backup) for the entire duration of the swim practice.
3. Have designated safety persons, preferably a certified lifeguard, on the water with the swimmers, the number of safety people depends on the number of swimmers
4. Have a designated coach or safety director on-shore to observe all swimmers
5. Inform swimmers of the swimming area including, entrance, exit, course for the swim, length of the swim, possible emergency exit points
6. Discuss potential course hazards areas and potential threats from marine life if any
7. Pair each swimmer with a “buddy” of similar swimming ability and direct them to stay as close together as possible during the swim
8. Agree upon hand signals that may be used between the on-shore monitor and on water personnel
9. Assign the “on water” safety personnel in a position to be able to watch & assist all swimmers

## During the Swim

1. Account for all swimmers and monitoring personnel going into the water (written head count, written list of names, holding ID, etc.) and share that with the on water safety personnel
2. Note any new, inexperienced, and infrequent open water swimmers. Maybe use a different color cap for these participants. Assess the open water swimming ability of these swimmers before allowing them to fully participate in the swim.
3. On water personnel should have a flotation device, in addition to their own PFD, to offer swimmers in need or rest or assistance
4. The coach or designated person(s) on-shore should stay on shore and watch all swimmers and monitoring personnel all of the time
5. Account for all swimmers and monitoring personnel coming out of the water (written head count, check names off list, return ID’s, etc.).