

# USMS Open Water Safety Webinar Series



## Swimmer Safety



# Risk Management 101



- Swimming is a high risk activity
- 1 in every 140,000 that go in the water drown
- Because there is risk there is duty to protect

# Risk in Open Water

- Article Trouble Beneath the Surface by Bonnie Ford 10/13
- In a seven year span 44 people died during or immediately upon exiting the swim leg.
- Over 50% of these deaths were men in the 40's and 50's
- 4,300 USTA sanctioned events annually versus approximately 50 USMS Sanctions in 2014

# Safety and Education Initiatives

- These are becoming the most common mitigation strategy and race directors are increasingly abandoning traditional mass starts
- USMS Open Water Guide to Operations, Part Two – Open Water Safety Guidelines:  
[http://www.usms.org/admin/lmschb/owgto\\_safety.pdf](http://www.usms.org/admin/lmschb/owgto_safety.pdf)

# Training and Readiness

- Gerry Rodrigues excellent blog was picked up by ESPN as he responded to the Trouble Beneath the Surface article.
- “No replacement for proper training and readiness”
- Gerry compiled an excellent swimmer preparation list:  
<http://swimswam.com/open-water-swimming-safety-powerfulmessage/>

# Gerry Rodrigues List

- Receive medical clearance for training and racing.
- Hire a coach or get on a reputable and proven training plan.
- Spend ample time preparing for the distance.
- Spend ample time preparing for all types of racing conditions: cold water, warm water, currents, winds, low visibility, blinding reflection and sun, choppy waters, big surf conditions, rip tides.
- Acquire the skills of proper and frequent navigation.
- Become very familiar with swimming in very close quarters to others.
- Familiarize and prepare yourself for the discomfort from contact at race starts, buoy turns and swim “claustrophobia”.
- Practice in open water with a group, simulating race-like conditions.
- Have a proper-fitting wetsuit that is tested and familiar prior to racing (where applicable).
- Have a real swim race plan, not simply “I just want to get to my bike” (where applicable).
- Warm up properly.
- Start to the side of your group.
- Only swim fast at the beginning if it was part of your training preparation.
- Use rhythmic breathing with a 2nd-stroke frequency; no 3rd-stroke or higher breathing.
- The moment you have difficulty, roll over on to your back and wave your arms for assistance.
- Establish personal temperature collars, and adhere to them.

# Other Safety Considerations

- “Open water swims have obstacles to identifying distressed athletes and initiating timely resuscitation on open water” Dr. Kevin Harris, Minneapolis Heart Institute
- Some Swimmers should seek medical clearance before attempting to participate in stressful events.
- Water Conditions (temperature, sea state)

# Waiver, Disclaimer, Warning

- Make sure swimmers know of any inherent risks for the event.
- Have everyone read and sign a waiver that is distinctly separated from the registration information.



# Emergency Contacts

- Critical for proper handling of incidents to ensure that someone is notified in a timely manner.

## **CONFIDENTIAL** **Emergency Contact Information**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Special Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Special Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Pets: \_\_\_\_\_

Party with key to **YOUR** address:

#1 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

#2 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Next of Kin:**

#1 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

#2 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

# Caps and Numbers

- High Visibility Caps
- Categories
- Number Corresponds to Emergency Info
- Highly Visible Numbering



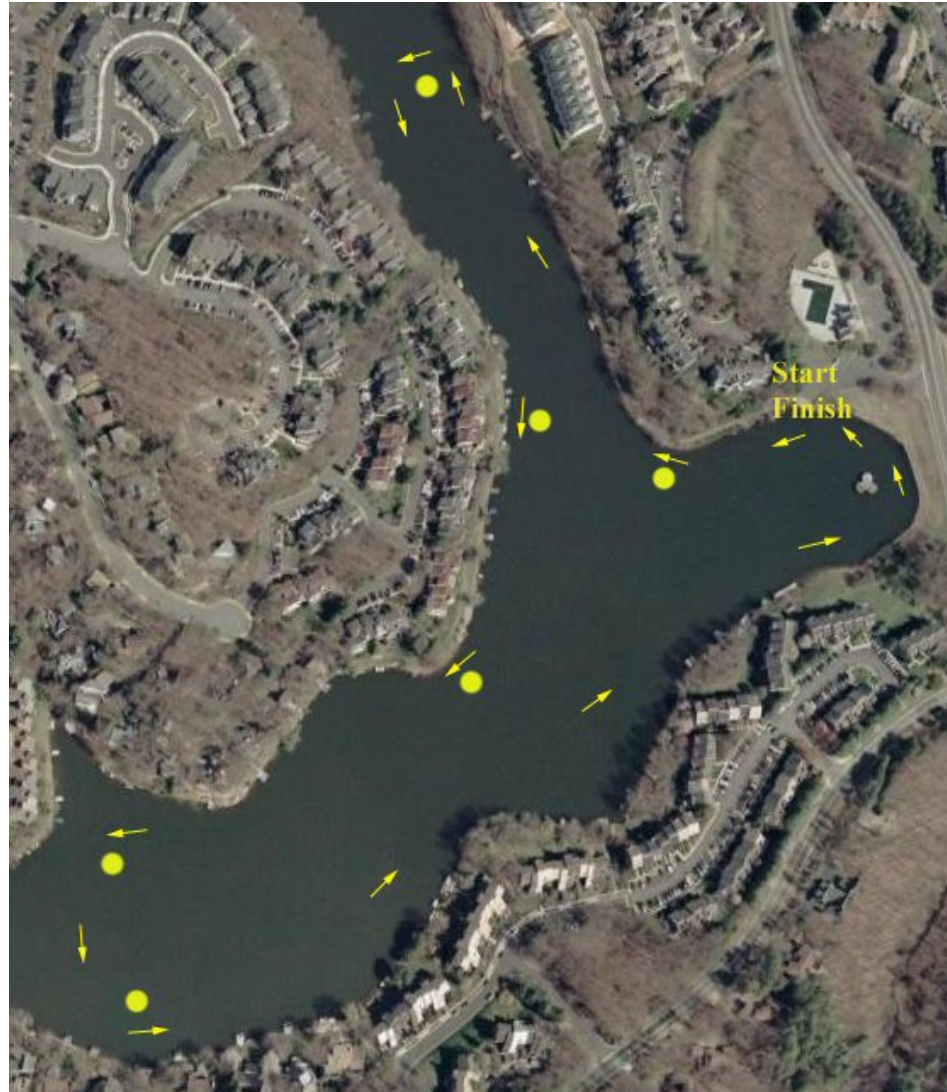
# Swimmer Pre-swim Safety Meeting

- This is a “must do” and should be mandatory for all swimmers before any organized open water swim. Be sure they are visibly and audibly accessible to all.





# Share a Course Map with All Participants



# Cover actual “race time” water conditions and potential changes





# Cover start/finish procedures, potential hazards and other tips





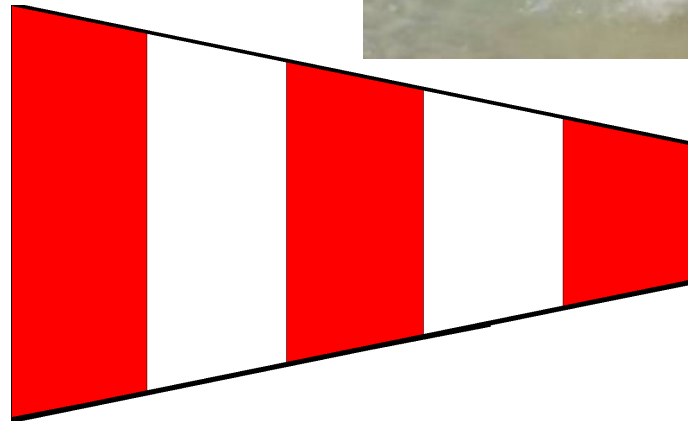
# Cover Lifeguard/Safety Monitor locations and getting assistance

- What they look like, where they will be station and how to get their attention if you need help



# Evacuate/Postpone/Cancel/Modify

- Evacuation Points
- Postponements
- Cancellations
- Modifications



# Plan for Potential Situations

- Heat and/or cold
- Tired swimmers
- Distressed swimmers
- Heart attack/stroke/seizure
- Marine life
- Cuts, bumps, bruises and abrasions
- In over their head



# Heat and Cold Emergencies

- Temperature collars are being adopted by many governing bodies.
- What is too cold? Some suggest:  
16 degrees Celsius or 60.8 degrees Fahrenheit
- What is too warm? Some suggest:  
29.45 degrees Celsius or 85 degrees Fahrenheit
- Open water swims must have a heating and cooling plan in place!

# Tired and Distressed Swimmers

- What is the difference between a tired swimmer and a distressed swimmer?
- Tired swimmer
  - Lower elbows, dragging arms
  - Change from horizontal to diagonal body position
  - Slowed forward progress
- Distressed swimmer
  - Vertical body position
  - Head back
  - Arms grasping or waving for help
  - Unable to call for help





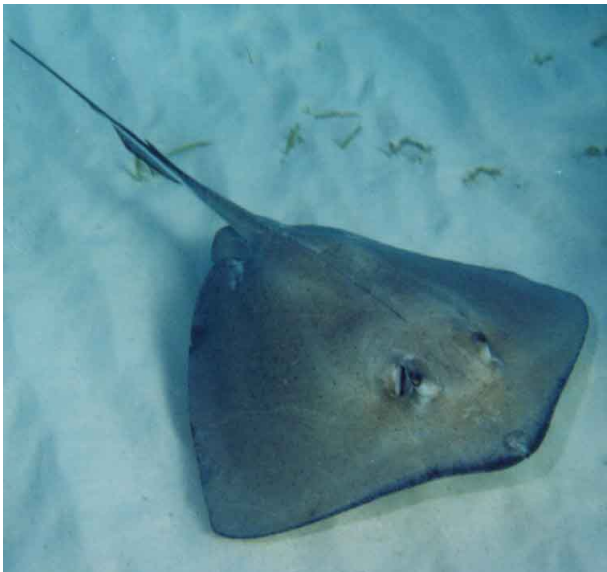
# “The Big Three”

- Heart Attacks
- Strokes
- Seizures





# Marine Life



# Cuts, Bumps, Bruises, Abrasions

- Ice, water and bandages
- First Aid Station versus Paramedics



# In Over Their Head?

- Swimmer Preparedness and Duty to Warn!



# Thank You

Next Webinar Sunday, July 20, 2014  
7:00pm Eastern

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Chairman, Open Water Safety Subcommittee

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