USMS Open Water Guide to Operations

Part 1: Open Water Sanction Guidelines
Revision Date: January 2014

This document contains the administrative rules and regulations for the sanctioning of open water events.

About U.S. Masters Swimming
U.S. Masters Swimming, founded in 1970, is a membership-operated national governing body that promotes health, wellness, fitness and competition for adults through swimming. It does so by partnering with more than 1,500 adult swim programs across the country; promoting information via the bimonthly member magazine, SWIMMER, monthly e-newsletters, STREAMLINES, and website, usms.org; and by sanctioning and promoting pool, open water and virtual events and competitions. More than 55,000 adults are registered members of U.S. Masters Swimming.
# Table of Contents

Article OW-101: Sanction Management ........................................................................................................ 3
  - OW-101.1 Administration ........................................................................................................ 3
  - OW-101.2 Sanction Process ..................................................................................................... 3

Article OW-102: Mandatory Safety Regulations ...................................................................................... 4
  - OW-102.1 General Information ............................................................................................... 4
  - OW-102.2 Motorized Watercraft ............................................................................................. 4
  - OW-102.3 Watercraft and Operators Insurance Coverage ...................................................... 5

Article OW-103: Insurance Surcharge ...................................................................................................... 5
  - OW-103.1 Collection of Insurance Surcharge ......................................................................... 5

Addendum A: Mandatory Safety Regulations .......................................................................................... 6
  - Regulations Summary .............................................................................................................. 6
  - Administration ......................................................................................................................... 6
  - Propeller Guard Examples ...................................................................................................... 7
Article OW-101: Sanction Management

OW-101.1 Administration

OW-101.1.1 Governing Bodies—The conduct and organization of open water sanctioning for U.S. Masters Swimming is governed by USMS through its Open Water Compliance Coordinator, Long Distance committee and LMSCs.

OW-101.1.2 Governing Regulations—The uniform sanction process operates according to the following rules and administrative regulations:
A) Article 201: Membership and Representation, USMS Rule Book Part 2;
B) Article 203: Open Water Sanction, USMS Rule Book Part 2;
C) Article 204: Liability Release, USMS Rule Book Part 2;
D) Open Water and Long Distance Swimming Rules, USMS Rule Book Part 3; and

OW-101.1.3 Sanction Management
A) Denial or Revocation of Sanction—The LMSC, USMS President and Executive Director have the authority to deny or revoke an open water sanction for failure to comply with any safety or administrative procedure.
B) Open Water Compliance Coordinator (OWCC)—The OWCC is a division of the USMS National Office and is a second level review over required safety plans and administrative procedures for all open water events. Contact the OWCC at OWcompliance@usms.org.
C) LMSCs—The LMSC with jurisdiction is responsible for issuing sanctions and scheduling events held in their LMSC.
D) Event Directors—Event directors shall run their events according to applicable USMS rules and administrative regulations and according to the process defined in their approved Safety Plan.
E) Open Water Support—Assistance with any USMS open water activity may be obtained at openwater@usms.org.

OW-101.2 Sanction Process

OW-101.2.1 USMS has provided an online sanction application process for use by the OWCC, LMSC authorized representatives and event directors.
A) All open water sanctions shall apply through the online sanction application.
B) A link to the sanction system ("Sanction an Event") can be found under the "Events & Results" of the home page of USMS.
C) Tutorials may be viewed on the USMS Guide to Operations—Sanctions Section.
D) Safety Plans shall be uploaded during the sanction application process and must be approved by the OWCC prior to issuance of the sanction.

OW-101.2.2 Sanction Eligible Events—Events defined under the USMS Rule Book Article 302 are eligible for sanction.

OW-101.2.3 The OWCC shall review the safety plan uploaded during the application process. A) The OWCC may request that the event host make changes to the safety plan prior to sanction approval.
B) The sanction shall not be issued without an approved safety plan.

**OW-101.2.4** The event director shall provide to the LMSC all approvals and licenses from all necessary entities, including parks, U.S. Coast Guard, etc., prior to the event.

**OW-101.2.5** In addition to the information requested during the application process, the LMSC has the option to discuss and request other items including:
A) Use (or not) of the One-Event registration, including determination of the total fee, which includes a USMS-determined base price plus additional LMSC fees;
B) Determination of the amount of the sanction fee or bond, if required, and requirements attached to the bonding process; and
C) Additional documents and publicity information.

**OW-101.2.6** The LMSC may offer optional services to events, e.g., providing buoys and other equipment. These are not considered part of the official sanction process and are by agreement between the LMSC and the event director.

---

**Article OW-102: Mandatory Safety Regulations**

**OW-102.1 General Information**

**OW-102.1.1** All USMS sanctioned open water events are subject to administrative review to ensure compliance with these standards. Failure to comply with any safety or administrative procedure may result in denial or revocation of sanction (see Article OW-101.1.3 for authority).

**OW-102.1.2** Events are encouraged to use the Open Water Safety Guidelines document (OWGTO, USMS Guide to Operations—Long Distance / Open Water), checklists, worksheets and safety education documents posted on the USMS website and elsewhere for preparation of their safety plans and management of their event safety.

**OW-102.1.3** Event staff must attend a mandatory pre-event meeting.

**OW-102.1.4** Boat operators and swimmer monitors (see article OW-102.2.2B) must attend a mandatory pre-swim boat operator meeting.

**OW-102.1.5** Swimmers must attend a mandatory pre-swim meeting.

**OW-102.1.6** Administration of the Mandatory Safety Regulations is detailed in Addendum A: Mandatory Safety Regulations.

**OW-102.2 Motorized Watercraft**

**OW-102.2.1 Propeller Driven Motorized Craft**
A) All propeller driven watercraft used in conjunction with the sanctioned open water events must have a propeller guard(s) installed for the duration of the event.
B) Propeller guards must be of a design that protects swimmers from propeller strikes.

**OW-102.2.2 Exceptions to Article OW-102.2.1**
A) Boats owned and operated by or on behalf of Coast Guard, police, fire and rescue, or other government agencies;
B) Boats with a swimmer monitor on board to assist the boat captain while navigating on the swim course. Swimmer monitors shall be assigned to each motorized watercraft without a propeller guard. The swimmer monitor shall insure the boat steers clear of all
swimmers while the motor is running. The swimmer monitor may not swim in the event. The swim monitor may not drive the boat; however they may perform other actions that do not detract from their primary role;
C) Boats at anchor from start to finish of the sanctioned event with engine(s) off, while any swimmer is in the water; and
D) Boats with propellers fore of the rudder (e.g. inboard motors), provided:
   (1) These boats do not run directly on the designated swim course.
   (2) For events requiring personal escort craft, water craft with inboard motors may be allowed on the course provided their engines are off when any swimmer is within 20 feet of the propeller and during relay exchanges. For feedings the swimmer may approach within 5 feet of the bow or side of boat with engines engaged.

**OW-102.3 Watercraft and Operators Insurance Coverage**

**OW-102.3.1** Motorized watercraft operators working at the event shall provide proof of insurance. The Proof of Insurance shall be submitted to the Event Director prior to the event.

**OW-102.3.2 Exceptions to Article OW-102.3.1**

A) Proof of insurance are not required when motorized watercraft are owned or operated by or on behalf of Coast Guard, police, fire and rescue, or other government agencies.

**Article OW-103: Insurance Surcharge**

**OW-103.1 Collection of Insurance Surcharge**

2014 Insurance Surcharge—USMS shall collect from the LMSCs an insurance surcharge for sanctioned open water events in 2014. The LMSC may pass along any portion of the surcharge to the event host.
Addendum A: Mandatory Safety Regulations

Regulations Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Verified By</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
<th>Required By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety Plan</td>
<td>OWCC</td>
<td>Plan uploaded with sanction application</td>
<td>When sanction is applied for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propeller Guards or on-board Swimmer monitor</td>
<td>Event Director and LMSC</td>
<td>Boat Operators Checklist report to be retained for 1 year</td>
<td>Morning of the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proof of Insurance for Motorized Watercraft</td>
<td>Event Director and LMSC</td>
<td>Copy of Insurance policy or other proof of insurance to be retained for 1 year</td>
<td>24 Hours prior to event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety meetings for event workers, boat operators, swimmer monitors and swimmers</td>
<td>Event Director and LMSC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-event for event workers; pre-swim for boat operators, swimmer monitors and swimmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administration

1. Compliance with mandatory safety regulations is administered by the Open Water Compliance Coordinator (OWCC).
2. Failure to comply with any safety or administrative procedure may result in denial or revocation of sanction (see Article OW-101.1.3 for authority).
3. The OWCC will review OW sanction requests that are submitted via the USMS online sanction database ensuring compliance with USMS rules and Administrative Regulations defined in Article OW-102 above and in the Regulations Summary in this addendum.
4. Sanction Process—following is a summary of the steps in the sanction process:
   a. Event applies via the online sanction program.
   b. LMSC Chair and LMSC Authorized Representative get e-mail notification.
   c. It is the responsibility of the LMSCs Authorized Representative, with assistance from the Open Water Compliance Coordinator, to review the safety plan and ask the event hosts to make changes as necessary.
   d. Once the LMSCs Authorized Representative signs off on the application, an e-mail is sent to the OWCC.
   e. The OWCC reviews the safety plan, consults with event directors and asks hosts to make changes as necessary.
   f. For events with motorized watercraft, the OWCC will discuss the mandatory safety regulations for motorized watercraft with the LMSCs Authorized Representative and the event director.
g. If the event host agrees to the guidelines and the safety plan is acceptable, the OWCC approves issuance of the sanction.

h. If the event host does not agree to the guidelines and/or the safety plan is not acceptable, the sanction is denied.

i. With the approval of the sanction, the event host is sent an e-mail reminder to follow the sanction guidelines.

**Propeller Guard Examples**

**Examples of allowable Propeller guards**

**Example of disallowable Propeller guards**