

Safety Tip of the Month – August 2008
VSI Safety Committee
“Team Safety Awareness”

Everyone benefits from a safety conscious team. The purpose of teaching **safety awareness** to athletes is to **emphasize safe habits** and **teach accident prevention techniques** by providing the necessary tools and guidance. Every age group has different characteristics and there are methods available that appeal to each one.

Team activities that can be used with every group include:

- Publish the rules and go over them with the swimmers
- Talk to the swimmers about safety with a question and answer period
- Give a safety survey to swimmers and discuss the results as a group
- Give safety tips to swimmers before, during, and after practice
- Adopt a team safety motto
- Make safety posters around the safety motto and display them in strategic areas
- Include your safety motto in the team newsletter
- Keep records of accident free seasons, months, and weeks; offer a reward
- Designate an annual/seasonal Safety Awareness Week

10&Y

Children in this category enjoy compliments, games, coloring contests and immediate feedback. They live in the here and now, with a shorter attention span, and will need constant reminders about their actions. Adults and older swimmers are their yardsticks to measure acceptable behavior. This group is easy to teach safety skills to because they haven't yet developed long standing bad habits. They still try to please adults and aren't as influenced by peer pressure yet.

- Reward safe behavior with a sticker, pin, etc.
- Sponsor a Safety Poster or coloring contest
- Have a safety scavenger hunt with a facilities checklist
- Be consistent

11-12-13

This group is in a transition stage. They want and need to be treated like adults some of the time, but, sometimes, they want and need to be treated like children. They are testing and challenging limits constantly, trying to develop their personalities. Peer pressure is a strong factor with this group. They don't like to stand out in a crowd and common goals will be a key for effective safety education. Give them respect and don't talk down to them.

14&O

These are the team leaders. They believe they are invincible. They will prefer discussion over worksheets. There is still the factor of peer pressure with this group; they will be more selective about their friends. The coaches' attitudes are extremely important for this group. They will follow rules for the "sake of the younger children."

- Give them leadership and responsibility
- Make them part of the solution rather than part of the problem
- Tell them that they are setting the standards
- Assign them a younger swimmer or swimmers to help
- Let them help write the rules, i.e.
 - How can we make this team safe for the little guys?
 - Can you think of a good game for the little guys?
 - What would you tell a little guy about racing starts?
 - Running around?
- Make safety a priority
- Be consistent

Coaches need to develop a **safe** philosophy and incorporate **safe** practices into the overall swimming program. This is easy to do with a **positive** attitude. If the coach is having fun with safety, the kids will follow suit.