

Safety Tip of the Month – February 2009
VSI Safety Committee
“Planning for Meet Safety”

Planning will reduce the number of potential risk exposures that are present in different environments, including practice sessions, meets and swim team related activities such as picnics and parties. A facilities safety inspection or walk-through is a great place to start planning for swim meet safety. Keep in mind that the facility might have its own safety inspection process and that should be included in the swim team planning process.

However, a swimming meet involves a large number of people with different perspectives toward the facility, so the swim team should not assume that the facility will recognize some of the potential exposures. An inspection or walk-through will heighten awareness of potential problems such as broken equipment or crowded hallways so that warning signs or barriers can be posted. It is also possible that through daily exposure to a facility, some potential risks become so familiar to the staff that they are not noticed. Therefore, try to include a person in the walk-through who is not a daily facility user, because they will see the facility from a fresh perspective.

There are many ways to enhance your powers of observation and to broaden your own perspective regarding the facility. Look at it as if you are a swimmer, a parent, a coach or an official. Take a ten-year old with you on a walk-through and observe what areas attract their attention. Sit in the bleachers, look at the facility and write down what you see. Stand behind a starting block and observe the facility from a different angle.

Common sense and observation will go far toward developing a meet safety plan. Walk-through and note areas of concern, then focus on specifics. Write an action plan to ensure that such areas will be properly marked with appropriate signs or will be adequately secured. Ask questions such as, "How can we route traffic around this area?" After the initial inspection, write a checklist that can be used before the meet begins. USA Swimming has examples of safety checklists that can be adapted to meet the needs of individual clubs.

Referees, Meet Director Meet Safety Checklist

Note, Locate, Resolve

- Locate nearest exits
- Locate and meet facility Manager and Safety Staff leader
- Check Emergency Action Plan
- Locate first aid equipment, check contents
- Is the pool chemical balance and temperature OK?
- Locate emergency call phone and numbers
- Locate: backboard, blood spill equipment and AED
- Ambulance - on campus or external? Directions to the pool available?
- Note dangerous areas including loose cords or electric wires - resolve
- Forms – Are Report of Occurrence forms available?
- 911 and Lightning Protocols Learn - Convey to coaches, officials
- Who monitors lightning? Are there “Safe” areas?

Marshals

- Minimum of 2 at every session Is coverage adequate?
- Distinctively dressed? Wear bright colored vests
- Do they understand their function?
- Are medically trained personnel at the meet?
- Ask, Introduce yourself
- Are lifeguards on duty throughout the meet?
- Pool and Equipment
- Blocks: stable? not slippery?
- Handgrips safe? sharp edges?
- Is pool deep enough to use starting platforms?
- Is diving board blocked off, and not hazardous?
- Are the lane lines safe? Loose wires, stable anchors.
- Are ladders safe?
- Is training equipment out of the way?
- Is the deck too slippery?
- Are there any open pole or starting block holes?
- Touch Pad and Anchors: sharp edges, projections
- Consider accommodations for swimmers with disabilities
- Is there sufficient gathering area behind the blocks?
- Are Spectators separated from Meet Operation areas?
- Can Officials operate safely and without interference?
- Shade, Hydration and Chairs for Officials and Timers.
- Warm-up Pool – don't forget all of above that's applicable.

Don't hesitate to stop the meet and resolve any safety issues anywhere in the venue!