

Amateur Swimming Association

Risk Assessment

Swimming Competition Events

Guidance Notes

The set up of any Swimming Competition is generally the responsibility of the Pool Operator and this activity is covered by his Swimming Pool Operating Procedures. There may be a limited input from the Event Organiser or Promoter where extra equipment is brought into the swimming pool and set up by the Promoter. Even then the Pool Operator should ensure that this equipment is safe as he is ultimately responsible for health and safety within the facility.

The Promoter of a Swimming Competition Event normally hires a swimming pool for the occasion and therefore the hire conditions should be subject to a contract of hire. This contract should specify the terms of the hire and identify the roles and responsibilities of both the pool operator and the Event Promoter (hirer). This will extend to the areas of responsibility with regards to the safe operation of the event.

As part of the set-up procedures the Pool Operator will normally provide and install the majority of the equipment commensurate with the level of the event. The equipment will usually include:

- Starting blocks
- Automatic Officiating Equipment (AOE) or Semi-Automatic Officiating Equipment (Semi-AOE)
- Anti-baffle lane lines
- Backstroke flags and poles
- False start rope and poles
- Chairs for lane officials as appropriate
- Winners' podium

Equipment more usually provided by a promoter (ASA, District, County, Club or Association), or even individual volunteer include:

- Stop watches
- Whistles
- Starting equipment not linked to an AOE
- Personal Computers and relevant competition software
- Competition paperwork
- Display stands

The safe operation of a Swimming Competition Event requires compliance with the home country's Health and Safety Laws. The principal legislation in Great Britain is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all its subsequent Regulations, together with the common law duty of care. There are also various guidance documents that should not be ignored when seeking to apply safe practice. These include but are not restricted to FINA and ASA Laws and Regulations, Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools publication (MHSSP), Safe Supervision for Swimming Teaching and Coaching booklet (SSSTC), Diving in Swimming Pools publication (DSP).

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 states that every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of:

- a. The risks to health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work: and
- b. The risks to health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him or his undertaking

A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm. The potential is always there e.g. a diving board.

A risk is the likelihood that the harm a particular hazard can cause, will be realised e.g. the difference between a supervised or unsupervised diving board.

Finally to manage a Competition Event safely it is necessary to have a clear understanding of whom are the responsible officials nominated to ensure health and safety standards are adhered to both in the set-up and throughout the event. Although the Referee is ultimately responsible for the safe conduct of the event he and the Promoter may wish to appoint a deputy with specific responsibility for managing safety. Therefore depending on the size of the event it is suggested that at a very early stage of the planning the following personnel who have a safety function need identifying:

- The Promoter's Representative for the Event
- The Referee for the Event
- The Pool Operator's Liaison Officer for the Event
- The Promoter's/Referee's Safety Officer for the Event:
- Technical Representative
- Technology Representative
- Poolside Controller
- Warm-up Stewards
- Changing Room and Spectator Gallery Stewards

Risk Assessment – Check Sheet

A. Key Personnel

1. The Promoter's Representative _____
2. The Referee _____
3. The Pool Operator's Liaison Officer _____
4. The Promoter's/Referee's Safety Officer _____
5. Safety Stewards _____

The risk assessment process is a simple tick box acknowledgement that the task in that paragraph has been carried out. If the Risk Assessor cannot 'tick off' any paragraph then action is needed to rectify an issue and minimise a risk before continuing.

B. Pre-Start Checks

(Pool and surrounds)

1. Check that the Promoter's representative is conversant with the Duties of the Promoter in relation to Health and Safety (ASA Law 204, ASA Handbook).
2. Check that the Promoter's representative has responded to the requirements of the *Swimming Officials' Prompt Card – Promoter*.
3. Check depths at ends of swimming pool to determine the level of safety checks required in relation to the start/entry dive and inform Referee (DSP).
4. Check the pool surrounds have sufficient clearance to allow safe movement of competitors and officials without undue risk (MHSSP, page 22).
5. Check pool surrounds for excessive slip, cleanliness, and freedom from litter and unwanted items of equipment (MHSSP, pages 24 & 32).
6. Check clarity of the pool water is sufficient to observe the swimmers underwater at all times (MHSSP, page 69).
7. Check pool water is at the correct level and depth. Check that the pool water temperature is at an acceptable level and in any case between 25°C and 28°C, so that competitors are not subjected to unsuitable competitive swimming conditions.
8. Check that the pool air temperature is at a suitable level for competitive swimming and in any case no more than 1°C warmer than the pool water.
9. Check that dimensions of the pool meet with the minimum standards for the event. The Promoter may also wish to verify the accuracy of the length of the pool at this point.
10. Check that the anti-turbulence lane lines are fitted securely and are at an acceptable tension with no exposed metal wire that could cause harm/injury to the swimmers.

(Ancillary areas)

- 11. Check changing rooms are clean and safe to use.
- 12. Check emergency alarms are working (MHSSP, page 67).
- 13. Check First Aid Room equipment and First Aid Box provisions.
- 14. Check Fire Exits are correctly signed and are unobstructed.

C. Warm-up Control

(Pool and surrounds)

- 1. Ensure that the Stewards are conversant with the Duties of Officials and Stewards with regards to Health and Safety (ASA Law 206, ASA Handbook).
- 2. Ensure that the Safety Stewards have responded to the *Swimming Officials' Prompt Card – Safety Stewards*.
- 3. Ensure that Stewards are conversant with and apply the *ASA Guidelines for Competitions, Appendix D, Warm-ups and Swim-downs* (ASA Handbook).
- 4. Ensure sufficient lane stewards are appointed and in place to supervise lanes.
- 5. Ensure no diving in warm-up session (ASA Guidelines for Competitions, Appendix D, Warm-ups and Swim-Downs, ASA Handbook) except in controlled sprint lane.
- 6. Ensure directional swimming is applied to avoid swimmer collisions (ASA Guidelines for Competitions, Appendix D, Warm-ups and Swim-Downs, ASA Handbook).
- 7. Ensure that sufficient lifesaving provision is on the poolside commensurate with the level of usage (MHSSP, page 63).
- 8. With regards to disability swimmers ensure that there are sufficient helpers to assist safe and effective warm-up practice.
- 9. Ensure non-English speaking competitors are catered for and understand safety procedures.
- 10. Stewards or lifeguards to maintain safety precautions during swim-down sessions.

(Ancillary areas)

- 11. Ensure that there is sufficient and suitable supervision of changing rooms and other areas where children and vulnerable adults could be exposed to risk (MHSSP, page 69 and ASA Child Protection Policy).

D. Referee's Briefing

- 1. Check that the Referee is conversant with the Duties of the Referee with regards to Health and Safety (ASA Law 205, ASA Handbook).
- 2. Check that all Officials and Stewards are conversant with the Duties of Officials and Stewards with regards to Health and Safety (ASA Law 206, ASA Handbook).
- 3. Check that Promoter has received a copy of the Swimming Pool Normal Operating Procedures (NOP) including the Emergency Action Plan (EAP).
- 4. Ensure that disabled competitors and other disadvantaged persons are considered in the NOP and EAP.
- 5. Ensure that relevant areas of the NOP with regards to safety of users in competition events are brought to the attention of the officials.
- 6. Explain those areas of responsibility that are the Pool Operator's and those of the Promoter.

7. Ensure officials know their own role and other official's roles in the event of an EAP evacuation, particularly with regards to (a) competitor accident, and (b) pool hall evacuation.
8. Check that all officials are sufficiently competent/qualified so that the competitors are not put at risk (ASA Law 415, ASA handbook).
9. Ensure that officials understand their role with regards to breaches or likely breaches of safety regulations (ASA Law 206.1, ASA Handbook).
10. Ensure that officials are aware of any obstruction in the competition area that may be hazardous to competitors e.g. projecting steps.
11. Ensure that the length of each competition session does not exceed a reasonable period of time that an official should expect to stay alert - maximum 4 hours without a break (Working Time Regulations).
12. Ensure that officials are not subject to dehydration in the pool hall environment whilst carrying out their duties.
13. Answer any questions on points of confusion in relation to the NOP/EAP and safety in general.

E. Pre-event Checks.

(Pool and surrounds)

1. Check that all starting blocks are fitted safe and secure and meet the appropriate standards for the event (FINA, LEN & ASA Handbooks).
2. Check that the AOE or Semi-AOE is fitted securely and is not subject to unacceptable movement.
3. Check that all official's chairs are sturdy, stable and safe to use.
4. Check that all ancillary poolside equipment is safe and in good condition.
5. Check that all cabling on the poolside electrical or otherwise is secured and is not a trip hazard.
6. Check that all electrical equipment and cabling on the pool deck are fitted with residual current breakers and do not exceed 12 volts (Electricity at Work Regulations 1989).
7. Carry out a visual check on all electrical appliances both fitted and portable to they are in good condition THE CHECKING OFFICIAL IS CAUTIONED NOT TO TOUCH ANY SUSPECT ELECTRICAL CABLING.
8. Check that sufficient lifesaving provision is on the poolside throughout the competition commensurate with the level of the event - minimum of one lifeguard plus back up off poolside (MHSSP, page 63).
9. Check that the AOE or Semi AOE is suitable for disability swimmers.
10. Check that there are sufficient and suitable helpers in relation to disability swimmers.

(Ancillary areas)

11. Check that all electrical equipment and cabling looks visually in good condition.
12. Check that no more than one extension lead is used between the power socket and electrical equipment.
13. Check that all cabling electrical or otherwise is secured and is not a trip hazard.
14. Ensure that there is a spectator steward if it is anticipated that the spectator area may be subject to overcrowding.

- 15. In the event of an official taking entrance fees ensure that that official is placed in a secure area and that the monies are securely managed so as not to invite assault and robbery.
- 16. In the case of an event that is longer than one session or day arrange safe and secure banking arrangements.

F. Pre-Start Announcements

- 1. Ensure that the announcer’s public address system is clear and audible to all competitors and spectators and that announcements will not be misunderstood.
- 2. Ensure that the Announcer responds to the *Swimming Officials’ Prompt Card – Announcer* before the start of each session of the competition and before each pre-competition training period, and in any case:
- 3. Ensure that the Announcer responds to any instructions the Referee requires to be announced to the competitors and spectators regarding safety issues appertaining to the competition before each session of the competition.
- 4. Check that the competitors and spectators are informed of the locations of the Fire Exits.
- 5. If the swimming pool has a moveable floor announce the current depth (MHSSP, page 27).

G. Event Control

- 1. The Promoter’s/Referee’s Safety Officer to ensure that the safety protocols checked prior to the event start are maintained by regular monitoring.
- 2. In addition stewards to regularly monitor that the spectator areas are not overcrowded and remain within design/NOP usage levels.
- 3. Ensure spectators exit in an orderly manner.

H. De-Briefing

- 1. The Referee to de-brief officials and record any incidents where health and safety were compromised.
- 2. The Promoter to report any incidents to the Pool Operator for recording against future developments.

Signed: _____

Risk Assessor