

Event Safety

Introduction

All of us appreciate the freedom and relaxed nature in open water swimming. As fun as it is to enjoy, we all must recognize the inherent risks we face in open water as opposed to pool swimming.

1. Most pools have some insurance to protect swimmers from any accident.
2. Most pools are regularly inspected by local health departments for water quality and safety.
3. Most pools are maintained to near perfect swimming conditions.
4. Most pools are staffed with full time certified lifeguards.
5. Most pools have emergency life saving equipment.
6. Most pools are near hospitals with emergency departments.
7. Lifeguards are able to see the entire pool including the bottom.
8. Swimmers have lane lines separating the lanes and lines on the bottom and turn targets on the wall to follow.
9. Most pools will suspend operations in dangerous weather conditions.

The follow are measures to mitigate these risks.

Event Preparation

All participants must be currently registered USMS members. (This requirement along with one requiring all participants being under direct observation of a USMS registered member during the event means participants will have USMS insurance for the event under practice rules. See: <https://www.usms.org/club-central/insurance>)

All participants need to practice and develop their swimming in a pool prior to trying an open water event. Participants will enter the event through Swim.com. By that time, they are required to have recorded swims in a pool of equal distance or greater than the event they plan to enter.

All events are scheduled to occur in Utah State Parks. Water quality is tested regularly and conditions are posted daily of each State Park website. If any issues occur we should have ample time to reschedule or change the event location.

By swimming these events virtually each week, we have built in schedule flexibility to adjust the event swim due to poor weather conditions without our participants losing the opportunity to complete the swim.

Event Participation

All participants must sign the Event Participation Waiver prior to the event.

All participants must have and use a “safe swim buoy” during their event. (See <https://www.xterrawetsuits.com/collections/accessories/products/xterra-swim-buoy-orange>)

During scheduled event group swims, Event USMS member observers will be using paddleboards to maintain observation of the participants. We will have one observer for each 10 participants. Participants may bring their own support person and non-motorized watercraft if they choose. For participants swimming on their own, they will need to supply their own USMS registered member observer during their swim to comply with USMS insurance requirements.

During each group swim, the event will have at least one certified lifeguard on duty for the safety of the event participants. This lifeguard(s) will be in communication with event observers and with the State Park Staff during the event. In the event of an emergency, the lifeguard(s) will provide first aid until emergency staff arrives from local resources.

All event swims in State Parks will occur in designated swim areas or in designated no wake zones. Participants are required to stay in these zones. In general swims will occur within 100m of the shoreline.

No participants shall swim in water temperatures less than 57°F. Participants shall be required to wear wetsuits if water temperature is 57°F or less than 60.8°F. No participants shall swim in water temperatures greater than 85°F.

During group swims all participants must avoid physical contact with other participants and their swim buoys. Participants shall not change directions during their swim to prevent other participants from overtaking them. Individual support non motorized water craft shall avoid all participants unless aid is requested. Flagrant violations of these rules can result in event disqualification.

No participant shall swim in conditions in which they are not confident of their ability to complete the swim. During a swim if weather conditions worsen, participants should swim to the nearest shoreline and signal to their USMS member observer their decision to stop their swim.

If during a swim participants need assistance for any reason, they should stop swimming, hold onto their swim buoy, signal to a USMS member observer by waving one arm. They may rest or recover until they are ready to resume their swim or they may stop their swim at that point.

If during the swim participants hear 3 short blasts from an air horn, all participants should immediately stop their swim, hold on to their swim buoys and receive directions from their USMS member observers. This could be a warning of a nearby hazard, a need to return to the start area, or a need to swim to the nearest shoreline.