



# INTRODUCTION TO OPEN WATER SWIMMING (OWS) OFFICIATING - LEVEL 1

June 21, 2021

# WELCOME



- The goal of any volunteer or official is to contribute to a fair, safe and positive competitive environment.
- The goal of this session is to:
  1. Begin your journey as an open water swimming official
  2. Understand the terms used at an open water swimming competition
  3. Understand the role of the other officials
  4. Understand the key duties of a timekeeper, turn judge, recorder, finish judge and other volunteers

# CONTENT



- Key Terms
- The Course
- The Race
- Safety Considerations
- The Officials
- The Volunteers
- Wetsuit Regulations

# EXCELLENCE IN OFFICIATING



- As an official, an individual must operate from a strong base. That base is made up of two factors – one is the authority of the rulebook and the other is the basic philosophy that the officials conduct the competition in accordance with the rules.
- The official's job is to uphold the rules by applying them in a fair and impartial manner and communicating their interpretation effectively.
- There is a code of conduct that all officials are expected to follow. Some Provincial Swimming bodies have all their officials sign and acknowledge a Code of Conduct.



# KEY TERMS

# WHAT IS OPEN WATER SWIMMING?



“As the name implies, a swimming competition in a body of water open to the outdoors over a long distance”

## ***FINA OWS 1 DEFINITIONS***

***OWS 1.1 OPEN WATER SWIMMING shall be defined as any competition that takes place in rivers, lakes, oceans or water channels except for 10km events.***

***OWS 1.1.1 MARATHON SWIMMING shall be defined as any 10km event in open water competitions.***

***OWS 1.2 The age limit for all FINA Open Water Swimming events should be at least 14 years of age.***

# WHAT IS OPEN WATER SWIMMING?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn716JqSGV8&t=1s>

# KEY TERMS



- **Check in** – The indication that a swimmer intends to participate in an event.
- **Check Point** – A point along the course where a swimmer's progress is noted.
- **Countdown** – The announcement made at regular intervals communicating the time remaining before the start of the race.
- **Drafting or Slipstreaming** – Swimming behind a support craft with the purpose of taking advantage of the reduced water resistance created by the former's wake. (OWS 6.2)
- **Entry Times** – Times filed with an entry, as having been previously achieved. Also called Submitted Times.

## KEY TERMS (cont'd)



- **Escort Craft** – Boats, paddle boards or other watercraft used by officials for the swimmer's safety and logistical support.
- **Finish** – The finish shall be clearly defined by a row of buoys and marked by a vertical wall. (OWS 7.2)
- **Grease** – Substance used by the swimmers to reduce friction or reduce the loss of body heat during a swim.
- **Heat** – The second or subsequent start used if the start area cannot accommodate all contestants at the same time for a start.

## KEY TERMS (cont'd)



- **Individual Swim** – An individual un-paced and uncontested swim for time and/or distance, not normally considered to be part of a competitive race. Equivalent to a time trial or record attempt against time in pool swimming.
- **Invitational Competition** – For those swimmers, organizations and clubs invited by the host.
- **Lead Boat** – The boat used as a course guide for the swimmers, usually following the course a short distance in front of the lead swimmer.
- **LOC (Local Organizing Committee)** – The administrative body entrusted to plan and carry out the logistics' of the competition.

## KEY TERMS (cont'd)



- **Material** – safety jackets, personal flotation device, sound system, radios, stop-watches, clip board, starting device, pencils, markers, bathing caps, rain poncho's, etc.
- **May** – Permissive, not mandatory – used in rulebooks
- **Medical Evacuation Plan** – Written plans for the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency or need for medical intervention.
- **Navigational Aid** – A device used to accurately measure and establish a course to be swum.
- **Open Competition** – Competition which any qualified club, organization or individual may enter.

## KEY TERMS (cont'd)



- **Pacing** – An attempt by a person not participating in the race to enter the water with the intent of providing moral support or otherwise assisting a swimmer in setting the tempo of the race.
- **Paddler** – A person on a paddle board or manually propelled craft who supports a swimmer or group of swimmers.
- **Provincial Sections (PS)**– Independent branches of Swimming Canada entrusted to administer the sanction authority of Swimming Canada within the geographic boundaries of the respective provinces.

## KEY TERMS (cont'd)



- **Rulebook** – “Swimming Rules of Swimming Canada”; Revised Edition February 28, 2018
- **Sanction** – A permit issued by a PS to conduct an event or meet.  
(Note: All athletes participating in any Swimming Canada sanctioned swim meet must be registered Swimming Canada members.)
- **Shall or Must** – Mandatory.
- **Split Time** – Time recorded from an official start to completion of an initial distance within a longer event.
- **Start List** – List of swimmers and their assigned numbers entered in an event.

## KEY TERMS (cont'd)



- **Support Personnel** – Persons in the swimmer's escort craft or on land who provide feeding, navigating, coaching and/or other supporting activities for a swimmer.
- **Time Standard** – The time standard for an event in a meet is the time a swimmer must have previously achieved to enter that event.
- **Turn** – A point on the course where the swimmers reverse or change direction of the swim.
- **Venue** – Geographical area and environs where the swim is conducted.

# TERMS/ACRONYMS



- **CMOWS** - Canadian Masters Open Water Swimming rule
- **COWS** - a Canadian Open Water Swimming rule
- **FINA** - Fédération Internationale de Natation
- **OWS** – FINA Open Water Swimming Rule



# THE COURSE

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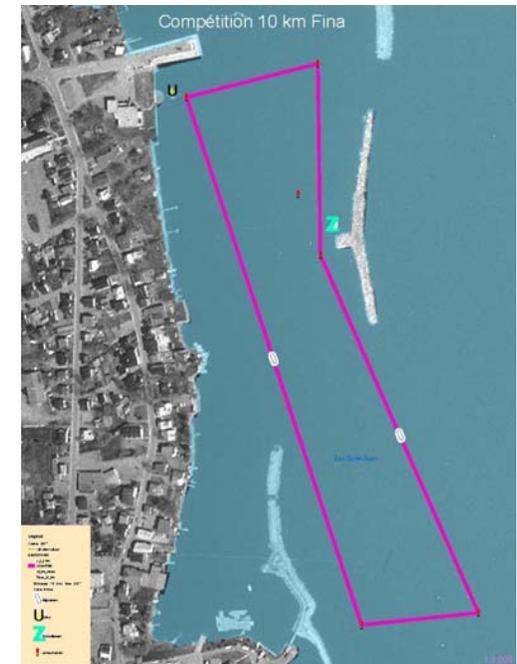
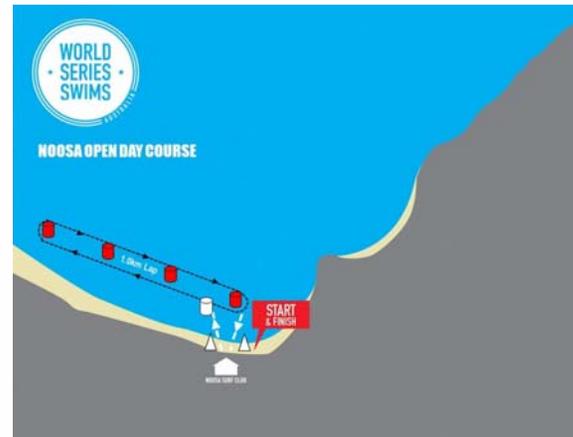


- Starting line
  - Dock start
  - In water start
- Markers
  - Turns
  - Course markers
- Finish line
  - Funnel entrance
  - Vertical plane



# THE COURSE

- Parallel to a shoreline
- Point to point
- Lake and river swims
- Closed course marked by buoys
- Any combination of above
- Ocean swims



# THE COURSE



## A good Open Water swim course...

- Has a large map
- Minimizes swimmer confusion
- Eliminates direction change until field spreads
- Has fixed or anchored course markers:
  - At 3 metre intervals or so with a floating line for separation for courses that bring swimmers into close proximity in opposite directions
  - Brightly coloured turn markers - different colour than course markers
  - Securely anchored
  - Of different colours from course and turn markers for hazards or dangerous areas

# THE BRIEFING



## Mandatory briefing for all swimmers and coaches prior to start

- Ensure instructions heard and understood
- Involve all participants in briefing



## Briefing should cover:

- Swimmer obligations
- Starting procedures/signals
- Swimmer positioning at start area
- Safety and courtesy
- Getting aid while swimming
- Course directions/markers/rules
- Feeding stations
- Finish procedure
- Race termination procedure
- Cut off time for event



# THE RACE

# THE START



## Preparing For The Start

- Clerk of Course signals start by alerting participants at pre-set intervals
- Large entries can be divided into heats
- Swimmers clearly identified on the body & cap
- Start Line clearly defined
- Competitors begin:
  - Standing on a fixed platform or
  - Treading water if sufficient depth



# THE START



**OWS 4.1** – *All Open Water competitions shall start with all competitors standing on a fixed platform or in water depth sufficient for them to commence swimming on the start signal.*

**OWS 4.4** – *The start line shall be clearly defined by either overhead apparatus or by removable equipment at water level.*

- Perpendicular to first leg
- Positioned near Starter

**OWS 4.7** – *The start signal shall be both audible and visible.*



# THE RACE – THE START



## READY

- Referee indicates start is near by:
  - Holding a flag held upright
  - Short whistle blasts
- Turns race over to starter by pointing flag

## SET

- Starter clearly visible to all competitors

## GO

- Two signals:
  - Audible
  - Visible
- Referee determines if start fair
- May stop and restart competition



# THE RACE – ESCORT SAFETY CRAFT



- Escort safety crafts are positioned so swimmer is at or forward of mid-point of the vessel
- Minimum crew for each escort safety craft is two people:
  - Race judge
  - Support person (chosen by the swimmer)



# ESCORT AND PILOT CRAFT



- For swims over 10 km, each swimmer has an escort craft capable of keeping pace with swimmer
- For swims 3 km and 10 km – meet director’s decision to provide escort craft
  - Based on conditions and swimmers’ abilities
- Non-event boat traffic control must be provided
  - Arrangements with the local law enforcement agency
- Escort craft must always display a fluorescent orange flag and identification of swimmer



# FEEDING PLATFORM

- Feeding stations may be required
  - Over 5km feeding stations should be provided every 2 to 3 km
- Generally provide water and nutrition:
- If water temperature rises, may need feeding stations closer together
- Several forms:
  - Floating platforms serviced from boats
  - Station positioned so swimmer cannot push off in direction of swim on leaving
  - Feeding poles – certified prior to event



# THE FINISH



# THE FINISH

- Lines of uniquely coloured buoys demark area leading to finish line
- Escort safety crafts do not enter the finish area
- Finish line flotation devices securely fastened in place
- Finish filmed and recorded by video system with slow motion and recall facilities, including timing equipment



# THE FINISH

- Chute finish recommended
  - Swimmers funneled towards finish line
  - Sized/designed for clusters of swimmers finishing
- Clearly marked
- Finish area controlled
  - Non-participants well clear
- Personnel to aid swimmers in standing up and exiting the water
- Water, towels, possible blankets available



# THE FINISH



**OWS 7.3** - *The Finish Judges and Timekeepers shall be placed so as to be able to observe the finish at all times. The area in which they are stationed should be for their exclusive use.*

**OWS 7.4** - *Every effort should be made to ensure that the swimmers' representative can get from the escort safety craft to meet the swimmer as they leave the water.*



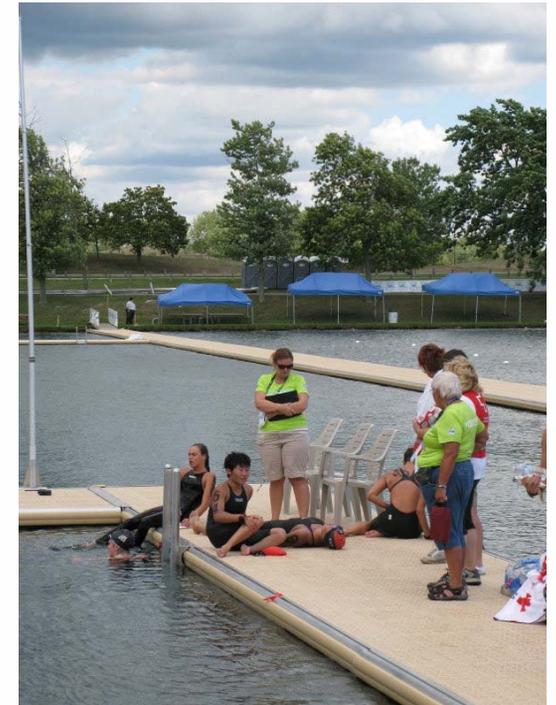
# THE FINISH



**OWS 7.5** - *Upon leaving the water some swimmers may require assistance. Swimmers should only be touched or handled if they clearly display a need, or ask for assistance*

**OWS 7.6** - *A member of the medical team should inspect the swimmers as they leave water. A chair, in which the swimmer can sit while an assessment is made, should be provided.*

**OWS 7.7** - *Once cleared by the medical member, swimmers should be given access to refreshment.*



# RESULTS/PRESENTATION



- When last swimmer leaves water or on expiry of time limit for race, Chief Finish Judge ensures master copy of placing and times for all swimmers is accurately recorded ready for printing
- Once satisfied that Recorder's Official Results List correct, Chief Finish Judge presents to Referee for signing
- Referee signs it, certifying Ratified Results of event at 1/10 of a second
- Copies of Ratified Results List made available to all swimmers & representatives as soon as possible after last swimmer finishes





# SAFETY

# SAFETY FIRST



## **OWS can be dangerous.**

Safety is the primary issue in any open water swimming event.

Consider all safety factors: start with...

- Who's responsible?
- Local Red Cross, canoeing and/or rowing / kayak clubs
- St. John Ambulance
- Local Emergency Medical Services organizations (fee likely)



# SAFETY

## Medical/Emergency Evacuation Plan:

- Detailed procedures
- Methods for transporting swimmers
- One plan required if the start and finish are same location
- Two plans required if start and finish are not in same location or more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  km (250 m) apart



# SAFETY MONITOR STATIONS



- Mechanisms/procedures for transporting injured swimmers
- Safety monitor stations positioned on course:
  - Minimum one station per thirty (30) entrants or
  - One station for every  $\frac{1}{4}$  km (250 m) of course length, whichever number is greater
- Cover complete course at all times
- Emergency evacuation boats cannot be counted as safety monitor stations



# SAFETY MONITOR STATIONS



- Safety monitor stations equipped with
  - First aid supplies
  - Emergency signaling devices to summon a medical evacuation boat
  - Communication system
- Detailed plan for cancelling
- Every participant accounted for
  - Record participants' numbers as they enter water
  - Record marked off as they exit the course (either at finish or if removed)
- Diagrams of course layout 'a must'



# THE OFFICIALS

# OFFICIALS OF AN OPEN WATER COMPETITION



Each of the volunteers will have a specific role or assignment. The following are some of the major officials required to run an effective open water competition.

- Chief Referee
- Referees
- Race Judge
- Turn Judges
- Feeding Platform Judge
- Chief Timekeeper (plus 2 Timekeepers)
- Chief Finish Judge (plus 2 Finish Judges)
- Clerk of Course
- Starter
- Announcer
- Recorder
- Safety Officer
- Medical Officer
- Course Officer

*No official can act in more than one role simultaneously. They may only undertake a new role after all of the obligations of their previous role has been fulfilled.*

# OFFICIALS ATTIRE



As Open Water competitions take place outdoors in variable conditions, please ensure you have all the equipment required for the forecasted weather:

- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Jacket
- Gloves
- Sweater
- Raincoat
- Shoes that are appropriate for your assigned position
- Any other clothing that may be needed for the weather conditions



# TIMEKEEPER DUTIES

# BEFORE THE EVENT



- Verify that the stopwatch is in good working order.
- Synchronise their stopwatch with the clock giving the official time 15 minutes prior to the start.
- Receive the start list from the Recorder.

## Minimum Material Requirements

- Stopwatch with recording and printing capacity, rolls of paper and batteries.
- Clip boards and pencils
- Start list

# DURING AND AFTER THE EVENT



- The start shall be given by lowering the flag, with the arm extended, while simultaneously emitting an audible signal once the starter judges that the swimmers are ready.
- Timers start their watches at the sound transmitter (whistle, horn, fog horn.)
- The Timekeeper aligns himself/herself beside or above the arrival pad.
- Records the swimmer's number and arrival time and provides the information to the Chief Timekeeper.
- Stop the stopwatch only upon the order of the Chief Timekeeper



# FINA OPEN WATER SWIMMING RULES RELATED TO TIMEKEEPER ROLE



**OWS 3.16** - *Take the time of each swimmer(s) assigned. The watches must have memory and print out capability and shall be certified correct to the satisfaction of the Management Committee.*

**OWS 3.17** - *Start their watches at the starting signal, and only stop their watches when instructed by the Chief Timekeeper.*

**OWS 3.18** - *Promptly after each finish record the time and swimmers' number on the time card and turn it over to the Chief Timekeeper.*

Note: When Automatic Officiating Equipment is used, the same complement of hand timers is to be used.



# TURN JUDGE DUTIES

# BEFORE THE EVENT



- Receive the race plan from the Organizing Committee.
- Receive the start lists from the Recorder.

## Minimum Material Requirements

- Whistle
- Start list
- Pencils
- Pre-numbered turn forms



# DURING AND AFTER THE EVENT



## During the event

The Turn Judge is positioned near the buoy for which he is responsible to:

- See to the proper turning of the swimmer around the buoy.
- Warn swimmers in case of infraction by blast on a whistle.
- Inform a Referee of all rule infractions as quickly as possible.
- Complete the pre-numbered Turn Forms for each lap then sign and submit them to the Chief Finish Judge at the end of the event.

## After the event

- Leaves his position only once authorization is given by the Chief Referee.

# FINA OPEN WATER SWIMMING RULES RELATED TO TURN JUDGE ROLE



**OWS 3.31** - *Be positioned so as to ensure all swimmers execute the alterations in course as indicated in the competition information documents and as given at the pre-race briefing.*

**OWS 3.32** - *Record any infringement of the turn procedures on the record sheets provided and indicate the infringement at the time by blasts on a whistle, then immediately communicate the infringement to the Chief Referee.*

**OWS 3.33** - *Promptly upon completion of the event deliver the signed record sheet to the Chief Race Judge.*



# RACE JUDGE DUTIES

# BEFORE THE EVENT



- May be allocated an area to patrol – this could be a shore allocation, an area of a beach or bank, or a boat where they would be allocated a single swimmer to escort throughout a race
- If given a single swimmer, the boat should also carry the swimmer's representative, who may feed and/or give coaching instructions
- Receives the race plan
- Has a briefing with the Chief Referee

# DURING THE EVENT



- Watch all swimmers in their field of view to ensure they are not swimming too closely together to impede each other or cause fouls
- Ensure that no swimmer is impeded or disadvantaged
- Report to the Referee as soon as possible by radio, any infringements observed & immediately make note of the infringement to be given to the Chief Finish Judge at the end of the race
- Remove swimmer from the water after the time limit has passed or disqualification issued by the Referee or upon decision to interrupt the race
- Does not enter the finish chute
- Race judge leaves the water once their assigned swimmer has finished

# FINA OPEN WATER SWIMMING RULES RELATED TO RACE JUDGE ROLE



**OWS 3.27** *Be positioned in an escort safety craft assigned by random draw prior to the start, so as to be able to observe, at all times, his/her appointed swimmer*

**OWS 3.28** *Ensure at all times that the Rules of the competition are complied with, violations being recorded in writing and reported to a referee at the earliest opportunity*

**OWS 3.29** *Have the power to order the swimmer from the water upon expiry of any time limit so ordered by the Chief Referee*

**OWS 3.30** *Ensure that the appointed swimmer does not take unfair advantage or commit unsporting impediment on another swimmer and if the situation requires instruct a swimmer to maintain clearance from any other swimmer.*



# FEEDING PLATFORM JUDGE DUTIES

# FEEDING PLATFORM JUDGE DUTIES



## Verify feeding poles (when allowed):

- Feeding poles are not to exceed 5m in length when extended. No objects, rope or wire may hang off the end of feeding poles except national flags. National flags are allowed to be attached to the feeding pole but may not exceed the size of 30cm x 20cm.

*Note:* Feeding Poles have to be checked by the Feeding Station official when swimmers are being marked and should be observed during the race at the feeding platform.

# FINA OPEN WATER SWIMMING RULES RELATED TO THE FEEDING PLATFORM JUDGE



**OWS 3.55** *Be responsible for the management of the activity and the swimmers authorized representatives present on the platform, in accordance with FINA rules.*

**OWS 6.13** *Coaching and the giving of instructions by the approved swimmer's representative on the feeding platform or in the escort safety craft is permitted. No whistle shall be allowed.*

**OWS 6.15** *No objects can be thrown from the feeding platform to the swimmer, including sustenance. The swimmers shall receive their feeding directly from their representative by a feeding pole or by hand.*

**OWS 6.16** *Feeding poles are not to exceed 5m in length when extended. No objects, rope or wire may hang off the feeding poles except national flags. National flags are allowed to be attached to the feeding pole but may not exceed the size of 30cm x 20cm.*



# FINISH JUDGE DUTIES

# BEFORE THE EVENT



- Support the clerk of course team
- Receive, in sufficient number, arrival forms from the Recorder

## Minimum Material Requirements

- Pencils
- Start lists
- Arrival forms

# DURING AND AFTER THE EVENT



- The Finish Judge aligns himself beside or above the vertical plane.
- At each swimmer's arrival, record the swimmer's number on the arrival forms and submits them to the Chief Finish Judge.



# FINA OPEN WATER SWIMMING RULES RELATED TO FINISH JUDGE ROLE



**OWS 3.25** - *Be positioned in line with the finish where they shall have at all times a clear view of the finish.*

**OWS 3.26** - *Record after each finish the placing of the swimmers according to the assignment given.*

*Note: Finish Judges shall not act as Timekeepers in the same event.*



# OTHER VOLUNTEERS

# OTHER VOLUNTEERS - MARKER



## Under responsibility of the Clerk of Course

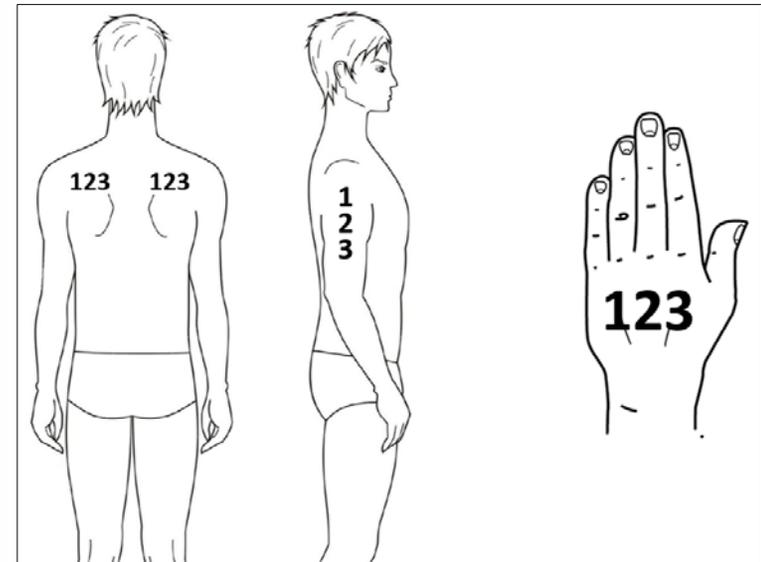
Before the start of the event:

- Control the swimmer identification process (Passport, ID card).
- Request swimmer put their suits on completely (one only) depending of the information given.
- Verify that the swimmer is not greased.
- Verify finger and toe nails, jewelry, earrings etc.
- In certain competitions, install a microchip transponder according to provided instructions.

# OTHER VOLUNTEERS – MARKER (cont'd)



- Mark the swimmers with the number assigned to them. Ideally, all of the following should be marked:
  - Hands (must be easily visible by video)
  - Upper arms – numbers must be marked vertically
  - Scapula (shoulder blades) – numbers must be marked horizontally
- Respect the marking model.
- Ensure that numbers are clear and legible.
- If writing numbers by hand, pay special attention to the numbers **1** and **7**.
- Ensure that the marking is **not** done by the swimmers or coaches (respect of marking models).



# OTHER VOLUNTEERS – MARKER (cont'd)



## During and after the event:

- Prepare clothes, snacks, etc. to be returned to the athletes
- If microchip transponders have been distributed, retrieve them
- Return Accreditation cards depending on the meet

## Mandatory minimum equipment

- List of swimmers
- Indelible large black felt pens (20mm) or stamps (note: plan for coloured markers for swimmers with darker complexions)
- Chip bracelets if they are being used
- Nail clippers or scissors with a liquid disinfectant



# OTHER VOLUNTEERS – PROTOCOL



## The week before the event:

- For international events, ensure that the flags and national anthems of all countries present are available for the awards ceremonies, for certain countries several flags may be necessary.
- Ensure that the organizing committee are in possession of the medals and provide all material necessary for the medal ceremonies.

## Before the start of the event:

- Prepare the medal lists
- Prepare the awards
- Gather the dignitaries

# OTHER VOLUNTEERS – PROTOCOL (cont'd)



## During the event:

- Prepare the flowers
- Prepare the flags and national anthems, the flag and cushion bearers
- Verify flag pole function
- Verify the podium and its background image

## After the end of the event

- Receive the results from the Recorder
- Organize the awards ceremony



# OTHER VOLUNTEERS – ANNOUNCER



## Before the start of the event:

- Receive the start list from the Recorder
- Announce regularly the times limits for registrations (when required)
- Announce the time remaining before the start in conjunction with Clerk of Course
- Call for the technical, safety and all other organizational meetings
- Provide all the information necessary for the smooth functioning of the event
- Ensure radio communication with the Media boat on a designated frequency
- Announce time remaining until start 20min, 10min, and 5min before the start
- Introduce the swimmers 5 minutes prior to the start

# OTHER VOLUNTEERS – ANOUNCER (cont'd) & HOSPITALITY



## During the event

- Provide commentary of the race

## After the end of the event

- Announce the results

## **Hospitality Responsibilities**

- Food delivery to event volunteers, officials and coaches on water and in place

# FINA WETSUIT AND SWIMSUIT REGULATIONS REVIEW



# FINA SWIMSUIT REGULATIONS



**BL 8.2** *In swimming competitions the competitor must wear only one swimsuit in one or two pieces. No additional items, like arm bands or leg bands shall be regarded as parts of a swimsuit.*

**BL 8.4** *For open water swimming competitions with water temperature from 20 C swimsuits for both men and women shall not cover the neck, nor extend past the shoulder, nor extend below the ankle. Subject to these specific shape specifications, swimsuits for open water swimming competitions shall further comply with all other requirements applicable to swimsuits for pool swimming competition.*

# FINA WETSUIT REGULATIONS



**BL 8.5** *For open water swimming competitions in water with temperature below 20 C, men and women may use either swimsuits (BL 8.4) or wetsuits. When the water temperature is below 18 C, the use of wetsuits is compulsory. For the purpose of these rules, wetsuits are swimsuits made of material providing thermal insulation. Wetsuits for both men and women shall completely cover torso, back, shoulders and knees. They shall not extend beyond the neck, wrists and ankles.*

**BL 8.6** *BL 8.1 to BL 8.5 apply also for the masters Open Water competitions.*

# CONGRATULATIONS



You have now completed the Level 1 OWS Clinic!

In order to complete your certification as a Level 1 Open Water official you must obtain the following experiences in an open water swimming competition:

- 1 experience as Turn Judge
- 1 experience as Timekeeper or Finish Judge

You may participate in the Open Water Level 2 Clinic, however you are not eligible for Level 2 certification until you have met both Level 1 and Level 2 certification criteria.

*Note:* The Level 3 Open Water Certification Clinic is only available to certified Level 2 officials.



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