



Open Water Safety Plan

Application Instructions

- Before applying for a USMS open water sanction, event hosts must review their event information and safety plans with their LMSC Sanctioning Officer. Upon approval from the LMSC Sanctioning Officer, the event host is then ready to apply for sanction.
- When applying for a USMS open water sanction, event hosts are required to submit their safety plan for review and approval by the Open Water Compliance Coordinator (OWCC) ON THIS APPLICATION through the online sanction process. We welcome additional supporting information—after all, many event hosts have developed extensive safety plans over years of hosting events—but everyone must submit this completed application to ensure that all pertinent points are covered in safety planning.
- Using a Google Earth map or equivalent, event hosts are also required to upload a map of the venue and course with the safety plan application. Maps must include locations of start & finish, guide & turn buoys, feeding stations, safety craft, lifeguards/first responders, on-site medical care, and evacuation points.
- In the best scenario, the Safety Director should assist the event host in the developing the event safety plan. If the Safety Director did not take part in developing of the safety plan (usually in the case of appointment after the sanction request or in the case of a substantially unchanged safety plan developed over years of experience), the event host must give the Safety Director a copy of the approved safety plan.
- Upon request, USMS OWCC David Miner will send you a copy of the approved safety plan. Contact David at openwateradvisor@usmastersswimming.org or 941-545-9709.

Open Water Safety Plan Application

Event Information

General Information

Name of Host: [District of Columbia Aquatics Club](#)
Name of Event: [DCAC's All Out Open Water Swim](#)
Event Location: [National Harbor, MD](#)
City: [Oxon Hill](#) State: [MD](#) LMSC: [PVLMSC](#)
Event Dates: [August 1, 2026](#) through [August 1, 2026](#)
Length of Swim(s): [2.5K and 5K distances](#)
Dual Sanctioned with USA-Swimming: [No](#)

Key Event Personnel

Event Director: [Mallory O'Connor](#) Phone: [480-282-1071](#) E-mail: Mallory.e.oconnor@gmail.com/development@swimdcac.org
Referee: [Mallory O'Connor](#) Phone: [480-282-1071](#) E-mail: Mallory.e.oconnor@gmail.com/development@swimdcac.org
Certified Safety Director: [Kendall Surhoff](#) Phone: [443-465-6792](#) E-mail: Kendall.surhoff@gmail.com

Pre-Race Safety Meeting (required): all officials & safety personnel must attend

Tentative date: [August 1, 2026](#) Time: [7:35 AM](#)

Tentative agenda: [During the safety briefing we will cover the location of the various safety personnel along the course and roles for various boats and personnel, how to use the radio and types of calls to use with the radio for potential emergencies or swimmer needs, what to look for for signs of distress and how to manage various scenarios, overall view of the course and how swimmers should be completing it, and answering any key questions.](#)

Pre-Race Swimmer Meeting (required): all officials & swimmers must attend to participate in race

Tentative date: [August 1, 2026](#) Time: [8:00 AM](#)

Tentative agenda: [During the swimmer safety briefing, we will cover the overview of the course for the swim and how the waves will work \(2.5K and 5K\), the best items to sight off of during the swim, and the location of safety personnel, how to exit the water, water temperature and if wetsuits will be permitted, and the overall flow for the day.](#)

Course & Event Conditions

The Course

Body of water: Potomac River Water type: Fresh river water Water depth from: 6 feet to: 15 feet

Course: The course will be off of the river channel in the inlet near National Harbor, with boats patrolling the outer edge of the course to avoid anything inadvertently entering the course area. The course will be comprised of a 2.5K loop (triangular) that swimmers will complete once or twice.

If open course, indicate the agency used to control the traffic while swimmers are on the course.

Agency name: Potomac Riverkeeper Network and US Coast Guard Auxiliary How to contact during event: Will agree on a radio channel for purposes of the event

Expected water conditions for the swimmers: (marine life, tides, currents, underwater hazards): No major tides or current expected, calm conditions with minimal hazards (will mark any hazards such as logs when marking the course)

How is the course marked?

- Turn buoy(s): Height(s) 6' Color(s) yellow and orange Shape(s) Triangle
- Guide buoy(s): Height(s) 3' Color(s) green Shape(s) round
- Approximate Distance between Guide buoys: 0.8K between each buoy

Number of Feeding Stations: zero - there will be food provided at the conclusion of the race, safety patrol kayaks will have water on hand in case of emergency

Type of structure(s) used as feeding station(s): N/A

Number of people the structure(s) can safely hold: N/A

Water & Air Temperatures

Expected air temp range: 85-95 Expected water temp range: 82-84 Wetsuits: Will only be allowed if water temperatures fall into appropriate range, but unlikely to be the case given the time of year the event is taking place. If water or air temperatures are too high, we will consider postponement of the event/have a thermal plan in place.

USMS Water Temperature Index for sanctioned open water events:

- Below 57°F (Very Cold) – heat retaining swimwear and a Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is **REQUIRED**
- 57°F-60°F (Cold) - heat-retaining swimwear is required or a Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is **REQUIRED**
- 60°F-66°F (Quite cool) - Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is **RECOMMENDED**
- 66°F-72°F (Fairly cool) - Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is **ENCOURAGED**
- 72°F-78°F (Cool) - No Thermal Plan required
- 78°F-82°F (Optimal) - Heat-retaining swimwear & neoprene caps are not permitted above 78°F.
- 82°F-85°F (Warm) - Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims is **RECOMMENDED**
- 85°F-87.8°F (Very warm) - Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims is **REQUIRED**
- 87.8°F-95°F (Hot) - Sanctioned open water swims cannot be held
- Over 95°F (Extremely hot) - Any swimming is ill-advised

USMS Water Temperature Measurement Procedure: Using an accurate thermometer, the event host should take three to five measurements at various places on the course—12 to 18 inches below the water surface and no closer to the shore than 25 meters (if possible)—within one hour before the start of an open water swim. The host should average these measurements, post and/or announce the resulting average temperature at least 30 minutes before the start of the swim, and announce it during the pre-race staff safety and swimmers' meetings.

Water Quality

It is recommended that one week before the event, check water quality. If results returned are inconsistent with the local governing body's standards, notify swimmers who participated in the event of any known exposures post-race. If an exceptional event such as heavy rain or flooding affects the water quality, the Event Director, Referee, or Safety Director shall have the authority to postpone or cancel the race. It is recommended to take and retain water samples on race day and retain for reference.

We work with the Potomac Riverkeeper Network who manages water quality monitoring across the region, and will take reads in the area in the lead up to the event.

Event Safety

Medical Personnel

Lead medical personnel (emergency trained) on site: [US Coast Guard Auxiliary](#)

Experience in sporting events (Marathon, Triathlon, Open water swim, etc.): [Yes](#)

Will medical personnel be located on the course? [Yes](#)

The number of medical personnel will be dependent on the course layout, number of swimmers in the water, expected conditions, etc. How many medical personnel do you plan to have on site? [2-3 Coast Guard representatives](#)

First Responders/Lifeguards & Monitors

Indicate the qualifications of the first responders: [2-3](#)

Number on course: [2](#) Number on land: [1](#)

Indicate their location on the Race Plan Map.

Onsite Medical Care & Facilities

Describe onsite set up for medical care, such as medical treatment tent, heating/cooling tent or facility. etc., and indicate locations on the Race Plan Map. [We will have first aid on site under one of our tents, including warming blankets and cooling fans](#)

Ambulance/Emergency Transportation & Nearby Medical Facilities

Ambulance(s) onsite: [None on site, located nearby and on call](#) On Call: [Will dial 911 in event of emergency](#)

Have you spoken with local emergency response agency regarding potential emergencies? [Yes](#)

Closest medical facility: [Inova Emergency Room Oakville](#) Phone: [703-289-2400](#)

Type of medical facility (urgent care, hospital, etc.): [Emergency Room/Hospital \(multiple within a 5-10 mile radius\)](#)

Distance to closest medical facility: [5-6 miles](#) Approximate transport time: [10-15 minutes](#)

Watercraft

Motorized Watercraft:

- Owned/operated by government agencies (Coast Guard, police, fire & rescue, etc.): 2
- Owned/operated by volunteers or hired individuals: 1

Will all motorized watercraft with a propeller owned/operated by volunteers or hired individuals be equipped either with a propeller guard or a swimmer monitor? **Yes**

Other motorized watercraft:

- With propellers fore of the rudder: **N/A**
- With impeller motor (jet ski, jet boat): **N/A**
- Anchored from start to finish: **Number**

Allocation of Watercraft:

- Safety Watercraft:
 - 1st Responders: Motorized: 1 Non-motorized: 2
 - 2nd Responders: Motorized: 1 Non-motorized: 8
- Watercraft for race officials: Motorized: 1 Non-motorized: 0
- Watercraft for race supervision: Motorized: 0 Non-motorized: 0
- Watercraft for feeding stations: Motorized: 0 Non-motorized: 0
- Watercraft for escorted events: Motorized: 0 Non-motorized: 0
- Other event watercraft: 10 kayak safety patrollers

Emergency Signal Flag Color for all watercraft: **Orange flag for an emergency**

Communications

Primary method between event officials: **Radio**. Secondary method: **Cell phone**

Primary method between medical personnel, first responders & safety craft: **Radio**

Secondary method: **Cell Phone**

Swimmer Counting & Accountability

Describe method of swimmer body numbering: **Written on cap and on shoulder**

Describe method of electronic identification of swimmer (Recommended): **Electronic timing bands**

Describe different bright cap colors for various divisions (Recommended): **Green caps for 5k and Pink caps for 2.5K**

Describe method of accounting for all swimmers before, during and after swim(s): **Count total number entering the water by race number**

Describe method of accounting for swimmers who do not finish: **Count swimmers upon finish, have kayakers follow final swimmers**

Warm-up/Warm-down Safety Plan

Describe safety plan for warm-up/warm-down, include number and location of lifeguards and designated watercraft. [No warm up and warm down associated with the race](#)

Swimmer Management

Maximum number of swimmers on course at a time: [100](#)

If more swimmers show up on the day of the swim(s), how will you adjust the safety plan to accommodate the increased number of entries? [Add additional waves to the event](#)

How will you deploy the safety staff and crafts distributed to supervise this event to ensure swift recognition, rescue, and treatment of any swimmer? [2 key patrol boats on the edge of the course, 3-4 kayakers per leg of the course, plus additional monitoring near buoys](#)

How will you deploy the safety staff to maximize rapid response to a troubled swimmer? [Communication will be key - flags for kayakers to identify location of incident and clear radio signals for coast guard response to assist in pulling a swimmer from the water](#)

How will you alter the event if insufficient safety personnel/craft are available on the day of the swim(s)? [Should insufficient support staff be available we may reduce the overall race distance or number of swimmers in the water at one time, or cancel should we feel we don't have sufficient support](#)

Describe your missing swimmer plan: [We will complete a full comb of the water with the support and assistance of the Coast Guard and notification of local emergency personnel](#)

Severe Weather Plan

Is a lightning detector or weather radio available on site? [Yes](#)

Describe your plan for severe weather or natural disaster: [In the event of severe weather on the day of the event, we will cancel - should weather arise during the course of the event we will immediately clear swimmers from the water \(but if we know of the possibility of severe weather we will plan to cancel in advance\).](#)

Describe your course and site evacuation plan, including accounting for all swimmers and other participants: [Course evacuation will direct all swimmers through the middle of the course directly back to the dock to exit, if there are swimmers further from the course, we will use safety supervision boats to assist those individuals in exiting the water.](#)

Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims

General Information

Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims: USMS Rules for Open Water Swims state:

302.2.2A (1) A swim shall not begin if the water temperature is less than 60° F. (15.6° C.), unless heat-retaining swimwear is required of all swimmers or a USMS-approved thermal plan is in place.

General Information

302.2.2A (2) A swim in which heat retaining swimwear is required of all swimmers shall not begin if the water temperature is less than 57° F. (13.9° C.), unless a USMS-approved thermal plan is in place.

Remember that the average masters swimmer does little or no acclimatization to cold water, so even a small drop in water temperature—especially in the colder ranges—dramatically increases the odds of thermal issues: Cold Shock Response, Cold Incapacitation, Hypothermia, and Circum-rescue Collapse). Be Prepared!

- If your swim course has a remote chance of water temperature less than 60° F., you are **REQUIRED** to complete the thermal plan below, showing your specific commitment to increased swimmer preparation before the event, reduced swimmer exposure during the event, and maximize mitigation & treatment of thermal issues during & after the event.
- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 60° F & 66° F., a thermal plan is **RECOMMENDED**.
- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 66° F & 72° F., a thermal plan is **ENCOURAGED**.

How will you assist swimmer preparation before the event:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Emphasize & stress on entry information of possible cold water swim conditions.
2. Require prior cold water swim experience.
3. Require swimmer cold water preparation plan.
4. Refuse entry if swimmer is not acclimated to cold water swimming.

What method(s) of swimmer preparation will you take: [Require swimmers to have proficiency and experience with open water swimming and swimming in a river setting. Provide information and emphasize potential heat considerations for swimming in late summer in the DC area.](#)

What action will you take to reduce swimmer exposure to thermal issues:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Cancel the swim(s).
2. Shorten swim(s) or institute/shorten time limits.
3. Encourage wetsuits for all swimmers.
4. Require wetsuits for all swimmers.

Explain your plan of action: [We will cancel the swim if the temperatures do not permit a safe event, we will also consider shortening the event if temperatures are high but still manageable. We will only encourage wetsuit use if in the appropriate temperature range \(which is unlikely\).](#)

What extra medical care will you provide to mitigate & treat symptoms of thermal issues:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Bring in more emergency trained medical personnel and/or ambulances.
2. Bring in more volunteers to assist medical personnel.
3. Bring in more emergency craft and first responders on the course.
4. Increase warm beverages before the swim and at feeding stations.
5. Have special procedures (different than normal) for removing swimmers from the water & venue.
6. Increase warm beverages after the swim.
7. Increase thermal treatment gear (blankets, hot water bottles, etc.)
8. Make warm showers available on-site.
9. Make warming facilities (buildings, tents, vehicles, etc.) available on-site.
10. Other: [Specify](#)

Specify what extra listed items you will provide: [We will have sufficient volunteers on deck to support swimmers and will equip kayakers with water and other items helpful in the event of heat emergencies.](#)

Comment on how you will be prepared to care for multiple medical issues: [We will prepare with sufficient volunteer support, Coast Guard support, and notification of emergency medical personnel.](#)

If the water temperature is below 72° F, will you be prepared to deal with cold water medical issues: If below this temperature we will likely cancel the event, but unlikely to see these temperatures due to the time of year (preparing for hot conditions).

Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims

General Information

Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims: USMS Rule 302.2.2A(3) for Open Water Swims states:

“A swim of 5K or greater shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 29.45° C. (85°F.). A swim of less than 5K shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 31° C. (87.8°F.).”

Remember that the average masters swimmer does little or no acclimatization to warm water, so even a small increase in water temperature—especially in the warmer ranges—dramatically increases the odds of thermal issues: Dehydration, Heat Stroke, and Hyperthermia. Be Prepared!

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature from 85° F to 87.8° F, you are **REQUIRED** to complete the thermal plan below, showing your specific commitment to increased swimmer preparation before the event, reduced swimmer exposure during the event, and maximize mitigation & treatment of thermal issues during & after the event.

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 82° F & 85° F., a thermal plan is **RECOMMENDED**.

How will you assist swimmer preparation before the event:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Emphasize & stress on entry information of possible warm water swim conditions.
2. Require prior warm water swim experience.
3. Require swimmer warm water preparation plan.

What method(s) of swimmer preparation will you take: [Require swimmers to have proficiency and experience with open water swimming and swimming in a river setting. Provide information and emphasize potential heat considerations for swimming in late summer in the DC area.](#)

What action will you take to reduce swimmer, official, and staff exposure to heat-related issues:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Cancel the swim(s).
2. Shorten swim(s) or institute/shorten time limits.
3. Remind all participants to stay well hydrated.
4. Remind swimmers to select appropriate pace.
5. Make swim caps optional or use Lycra swim caps.

Explain your plan of action: [We will cancel the swim if the temperatures do not permit a safe event, we will also consider shortening the event if temperatures are high but still manageable. We will only encourage wetsuit use if in the appropriate temperature range \(which is unlikely\).](#)

What extra medical care will you provide to mitigate & treat symptoms of heat-related issues:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Bring in more emergency trained medical personnel and/or ambulances.
2. Bring in more volunteers to assist medical personnel.
3. Bring in more emergency craft and first responders on the course.
4. Increase cool beverages before, during and after the swim (for swimmers and staff, including extra cool beverages on watercraft and feeding stations)
5. Increase heat exhaustion and heat stroke treatment gear (iced water, ice chips, cold water bottles, misting tents/fans, etc.)
6. Make cool showers available on-site.

7. Make shade and cooling facilities (buildings, tents, etc.) available on-site.

8. Other: Specify

Specify what extra listed items you will need to provide: We will have sufficient volunteers on deck to support swimmers and will equip kayakers with water and other items helpful in the event of heat emergencies.

Comment on how you will be prepared to care for multiple medical issues: We will prepare with sufficient volunteer support, Coast Guard support, and notification of emergency medical personnel.

If the water temperature is above 82° F, will you be prepared to deal with heat-related medical issues:
Yes, we will either shorten course or cancel - and also have additional water, ice and other cooling methods available on site.