



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.

Open Water Safety Plan Application

Event Information

General Information

Name of Host: [Chicago Masters Swim Club](#)
Name of Event: Big Shoulders 5K & 2.5K Open Water Swim Classic
Event Location: Ohio Street Beach, Lake Michigan
City: Chicago State: IL LMSC: ILMSA
Event Dates: 9/12/2026 through 9/12/2026
Length of Swim(s): 5K & 2.5K
Dual Sanctioned with USA-Swimming: No

Key Event Personnel

Event Director: Chris Sheehan Phone: 708-275-3290 E-mail: ctsheean@yahoo.com
Referee: Marcia Cleveland Phone: 847-227-7202 E-mail: marciac944@gmail.com
Certified Safety Director: Susan Bromberg Phone: 312-996-2255 E-mail: bromberg@uic.edu

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

Tentative date: 9/11/2026 Time: 5 p.m.
Tentative agenda: [Course](#), [weather forecast](#), [review emergency procedures](#)

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

Tentative date: 9/12/2026 Time: 7:40 am
Tentative agenda: Course, weather/water forecast, rules, role of lifeguards, emergency procedures, exiting of water requirements.

Course & Event Conditions

The Course

Body of water: Lake Water type: Fresh Water Water depth from: 5 feet to: 30 ft

Course: Closed-only event watercraft allowed

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

Agency name: Chicago Park District How to contact during event: Cell phone and radio

Expected water conditions for the swimmers: (marine life, tides, currents, underwater hazards): minimal tide/current, but wind can play a significant factor in waves.

How is the course marked?

- Turn buoy(s): Height(s) 8 ft Color(s) orange Shape(s) triangular
- Guide buoy(s): Height(s) 8 ft Color(s) Yellow Shape(s) triangular
- Approximate Distance between Guide buoys: ¼ mile

Number of Feeding Stations: 0

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: 65-75

Expected water temp range: 66-80

Wetsuits: Optional

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.

Chicago Park District tests water quality at Ohio Street Beach daily, and posts results on line.

Event Safety

Medical Personnel

Lead medical personnel (emergency trained) on site: Dr. Steve Hartsock, M.D.

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? More than 7

First Responders/Lifeguards & Monitors

Indicate the qualifications of the first responders: USLA

Number on course: 25

Number on land: 5

Indicate their location on the Race Plan Map. (Lifeguards are stationed in row and power boats all along the course.)

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. Medical treatment tent with heating facility when water temp is below 72.

Ambulance/Emergency Transportation & Nearby Medical Facilities

Ambulance(s) onsite: 708-995-1189 On Call: n/a

Have you spoken with local emergency response agency regarding potential emergencies? Yes

Closest medical facility: Northwestern Memorial Hospital Phone: 000-000-0000

Type of medical facility (urgent care, hospital, etc.): Hospital

Distance to closest medical facility: 0-2 miles Approximate transport time: 5 min.

Watercraft

Motorized Watercraft:

- Owned/operated by government agencies (Coast Guard, police, fire & rescue, etc.): 3
- Owned/operated by volunteers or hired individuals: 0

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): 0
- Anchored from start to finish: 0

Allocation of Watercraft:

- Safety Watercraft:
 - 1st Responders: Motorized: 3 Non-motorized: 8
 - 2nd Responders: Motorized: **N/A** Non-motorized: **N/A**
- Watercraft for race officials: Motorized: 1 Non-motorized: 2
- Watercraft for race supervision: Motorized: 1 Non-motorized: 2
- Watercraft for feeding stations: Motorized: 0 Non-motorized: 0
- Watercraft for escorted events: Motorized: 0 Non-motorized: 0
- Other event watercraft: 0

Emergency Signal Flag Color for all watercraft: Yellow

Communications

Primary method between event officials: Radio Secondary method: Cell Phone

Primary method between medical personnel, first responders & safety craft: Radio (separate channel from Meet Officials)

Secondary method: Cell Phone

Swimmer Counting & Accountability

Describe method of swimmer body numbering: Marker on hand, thigh, shoulder

Describe method of electronic identification of swimmer (Recommended): Chip timing used on ankles

Describe different bright cap colors for various divisions (Recommended): 10 different colors, by wave.

Describe method of accounting for all swimmers before, during and after swim(s): Swimmers go through timing chute entering and exiting the water, and all swimmers are accounted for on beach at conclusion of race.

Describe method of accounting for swimmers who do not finish: Swimmers are escorted to DNF chute, or reported by medical tent officials if they cannot make it to DNF chute.

Warm-up/Warm-down Safety Plan

Describe safety plan for warm-up/warm-down, include number and location of lifeguards and designated watercraft. 30 lifeguards on site during warm up.

Swimmer Management

Maximum number of swimmers on course at a time: 1200

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? Race is capped at 1200.

How will you deploy the safety staff and crafts distributed to supervise this event to ensure swift recognition, rescue, and treatment of any swimmer? Safety staff are all trained Chicago Park District lifeguards, with designated areas for transporting rescued swimmers to the medical personnel on shore.

How will you deploy the safety staff to maximize rapid response to a troubled swimmer? Chicago Park District lifeguards are deployed throughout the course.

How will you alter the event if insufficient safety personnel/craft are available on the day of the swim(s)? Chicago Park District supplies the lifeguards and we pay for their participation – not an issue.

Describe your missing swimmer plan: As noted above, we use chip timing to determine if a swimmer is missing. If any swimmers are not accounted for, we check with the medical personnel and lifeguarding crew to determine if the missing swimmer eluded our check in procedure. If still unaccounted for, we use the swimmer's emergency contact information to locate the swimmer.

Severe Weather Plan

Is a lightning detector or weather radio available on site? No

Describe your plan for severe weather or natural disaster: Chicago Park District Lifeguards use weather tracking satellites and determine if we are able to hold the event. In 2015 and 2018, they determined we could not safely hold the event, and it was cancelled.

Describe your course and site evacuation plan, including accounting for all swimmers and other participants: In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation, lifeguards accompany swimmers to the beach or to the sea wall along Lakeshore Drive (where there are ladders) to insure they return to the starting area. If the water is below 70 degrees on race morning, we allow swimmers to switch to the wetsuit division. We have a local vendor rent wetsuits on site the day of the race. If the water is below 62 degrees, we require proof of cold water experience

or require a wetsuit. In the event of weather emergency, lifeguards evacuate lake. Swimmers are sent to Navy Pier to wait out any weather emergency.

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.

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: Emphasize possible cold water conditions on entry.

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: If the water is below 70 degrees on race morning, we allow swimmers to switch to the wetsuit division. We have a local vendor rent wetsuits on site the day of the race. If the water is below 62 degrees, we require proof of cold water experience or require a wetsuit.

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: Items 4, 6, 7 and 9 above.

Comment on how you will be prepared to care for multiple medical issues: We have an experienced medical staff of doctors and nurses on site. Dr. Steve Hartsock has served as the team doctor for USA Swimming's Open Water Team for a number of years.

If the water temperature is below 72° F, will you be prepared to deal with cold water medical issues: Yes

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: In 35 years, we've never had temps above 80. However, we would warn swimmers of danger of overheating.

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: Cancel or shorten the swim.

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: 4 and 7, above.

Comment on how you will be prepared to care for multiple medical issues: We have an experienced medical staff of doctors and nurses on site. Dr. Steve Hartsock has served as the team doctor for USA Swimming's Open Water Team for a number of years.

If the water temperature is above 82° F, will you be prepared to deal with heat-related medical issues:
Yes