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Welcome to the new e-newsletter for USA Swimming Officials. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a foundation that allows for direct on-going communication with each of you. We plan to have articles that cover the technical rules and interpretations, situations, application deadlines for upcoming meets, news from the officials committee, etc. If you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions for stories (or even want to submit an article), please e-mail us at [officials@usaswimming.org](mailto:officials@usaswimming.org).

This past weekend I attended a FINA clinic for international swimming officials. FINA is the international organization that oversees aquatics sports around the world. About 120 officials from approximately 60 federations (there are currently 204 federations) came to Miami for the event. The clinic is very similar to our national clinic, except for how disqualifications are reported (in many federations and at FINA World Championships and the Olympic Games you write out the basis for the disqualification instead of checking a box on a slip) and some differences in meet management. I have always appreciated that while we might speak different languages (even though English is the official language of FINA) or come from different cultures when we judge swimming we are on the same page. We use the same rules and follow the same deck protocols. During the clinic we had breakout sessions, much like we do at our national clinic, where we discussed various issues and situations that are common to almost every competition in the United States. It was an honor and pleasure for me and the other USA FINA officials to be able to exchange viewpoints and get to know officials from around the world. If you ever want to know more about FINA, visit [www.fina.org](http://www.fina.org).

Additionally, The Official's Committee Athlete Representatives created a Facebook page last fall. It's a great way for you to stay up to date and engage in our community. If you haven't signed up yet, we hope you will. Click [here](#) to sign up.

Look forward to hearing from you.  
*Clark Hammond, National Officials Chair*

## **OPEN WATER EVENT PREP... IT DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN OVERNIGHT!**

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*By Matt Wilson*

The event is over. It has gone well, as you would have expected.

But it wasn't that easy, not by a long shot! Let's back up just a

bit, or maybe a little more than a bit...

### Preparation is the key

For anyone that runs swimming events, you know that they don't just materialize from the mist. There is a considerable amount of planning, time and effort that goes into any meet. However, for an open water event, the preparation time is typically much longer than a pool event would be. Many inaugural open water events start planning six months or more in advance of the event, and established events often put their plans together almost immediately after that year's event concludes. Some of the biggest reasons for beginning this process so far prior to the event include securing the venue and coordinating water craft, lifeguards, and medical personnel. All of this information becomes part of the Safety Plan, which, while always important, has become even more so in the wake of Fran Crippen's passing in 2010.

The Safety Plan is the most important part of the total Open Water Meet Application. Unlike most Meet Announcements, an Open Water event cannot be sanctioned by the LSC without approval of the Safety Plan by USA Swimming. Some of the things that need to be considered when putting the Safety Plan together include:

*-Venue needs:* Will the athletes be swimming in a lake? River? Ocean? Pool? Is the competition course closed (not accessible by boat) or open? If it's open, who will be assisting in keeping unauthorized craft off of the course?

*-Pre-Race/Technical Meeting:* When and where will it be held? What will be covered? Are there any special topics that need to be addressed?

*-Race Day Conditions:* What are the expected weather conditions at the venue on the day of the event? Remember, an Open Water event cannot be started if the water is colder than 60.8° F (16° C), and if you're doing a 5K or longer, the water cannot be warmer than 85° F (29.45° C). And what is the air temperature expected to be? If the combined air and water temperature is less than 118° F (30° C) or greater than 177.4° F (63° C), then you won't be able to do your event even though your water temperature is acceptable!

*-Medical Personnel and Care:* Will you have a doctor on site? How many lifeguards/first responders will you have on the course? Will they be moving, or stationary? Is this number scalable based on the number of athletes that will be on the course? Will there be an ambulance on site, and if not, what is their response time to the venue?

As officials at swim events, we are told to be flexible, and to be able to react to audibles as they occur. For open water events, flexibility is paramount! What happens if you have weather issues? What happens if unexpected marine life is encountered on the course? What if you have to abandon the event before it is completed? Unfortunately, you often have to plan for the worst, and hope for the best. If you plan for any possible issues that may arise, then you will be able to also plan for contingencies so that

going with the flow is a much easier process.

Ultimately, athlete safety is the most important responsibility that meet organizers and officials have to deal with at open water events. By proactively planning well in advance, you will give your event the best opportunity to succeed!

## **HY-TEK CORNER!**

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In May a new feature was added to Meet Manager. In the past if you had an event (say the 1500 or 1650 freestyle) set to have one or more heats in the finals session, and the remainder of the heat in an earlier session, the lane timer sheets would print out all heats for the event – no matter which session you were printing the lane timer sheets for. That has now been changed, so that the heats that print on the lane timer sheets are only the heats for the session you have selected. This is a change that will create less confusion for the lane timers, as it clarifies who is swimming when.