

**Safety Tip of the Month – October 2009**  
**VSI Safety Committee**  
**“So You Are Going to Be A Marshal At An Upcoming Meet”**

Thank you for serving as a Marshal in the upcoming swim meet. USA Swimming and Virginia Swimming, Inc., hold the safety of their swimmers as a top priority at any swim meet. You, as Marshal, are the primary enforcer of safety rules in the swimming pool area. You should report to the Meet Referee or Meet Director any safety concerns that are not quickly resolved by talking to a swimmer, coach, or parent. Your presence on deck, as Marshal, helps the host swim club maintain the protection of USA Swimming insurance within the meet venue for the duration of the meet. Furthermore, your presence on deck will help readily identify any potential or actual safety issues, call attention to the swimmer, parent, or coaching staff who may be engaging in unsafe behavior in the pool area, and minimize the likelihood of an injury during the swim meet.

**Guidelines for the role of Marshal:**

1. The [VSI Meet Safety Procedures](#) outline the warm-up guidelines and address many safety items.
2. Arrive at the swim meet at least 15 minutes before warm-ups start. Report to the Meet Director or the Meet Referee. They will issue you a colored vest or other identifying attire, for the purpose of official designation for spectators and swimmers. Please wear this attire throughout your Marshal duty at the swim meet. The Virginia Swimming Policy (Section P) on Marshals, states that “a minimum of two Marshals will be present at VSI sanctioned meets. They will be responsible to the Meet Referee(s) and the Meet Director and perform duties as outlined in USA Swimming Rules and Regulations. The minimum acceptable age for Marshals will be 18 years of age.” **NOTE:** *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations no longer require that the Marshal be a member of USA Swimming.*
3. During all warm-ups swimmers should enter the pool at the starting end only. Entry at the turn end is prohibited.
4. During general warm-ups, ensure that:
  - a. Swimmers enter the pool feet first.
  - b. Diving is not permitted from the blocks or off the edge of the pool.
  - c. No sprinting or pace work is permitted during general warm-ups.
  - d. Only circle swimming (e.g. down pool in right part of lane, turn at end, then swim back in right side of lane) is permitted.
5. For specific warm-ups:
  - a. Pace lanes: Push off for one or two lengths of pool from starting end, with circle swimming only. Racing or diving starts are not permitted.
  - b. Sprint lanes: Forward racing starts may be done off the blocks, with coach supervision. Make sure lanes are cleared before sprint lanes begin. Backstroke starts may be done in the water, but no swimmer is permitted on the block until the backstroker has left the starting area. Swimming is in one direction only, and the Swimmer must exit at the turn end of the pool.
6. During the meet, observe the pool deck and the area around the starting blocks. Keep the area clear where the swimmers and the officials need to walk. Typical areas to keep clear are the deck space between the clerk of the course and the blocks, the sides of the pool between the start and the turn end, the space around the starter/ referee station, and the space behind the starting blocks.

7. If there is a **general warm-down pool** that is used during competition, it must be observed at all times. General warm-up procedures with circle swimming is permitted. No diving is permitted. Intentional splashing, water games, and other in-water activities are not permitted in warm-down pool during the swim meet.

8. Check in the locker rooms and bathrooms. If there is any inappropriate or unsafe behavior in the locker room, ask the individuals to stop it immediately and notify the Meet Referee or Meet Director if the behavior does not cease at once. This includes **no cell phones, cameras or video recording devices allowed in the locker rooms.**

9. No shaving is permitted anywhere in this venue. If shaving is observed, the individuals should be brought to the attention of the Meet Referee or Meet Director as this is usually grounds for removal from the meet. Obtain the name of the child, if possible.

10. If you observe an injury in the swimming pool venue, make sure that an adult stays with the injured person. Notify the Meet Referee or Meet Director at once of any injuries. You may be asked to assist with the completion of the accident report. (NOTE: First aid is the responsibility of the facility personnel. They are paid to perform this service, and you are not.)

11. The Marshal has the full authority to provide a warning or order inappropriate behavior to cease and desist, and with the agreement of the Meet Referee, to have removed from the swimming venue any person who behaves in an unsafe manner and/or whose actions disrupt the orderly conduct of the meet. Use appropriate language. **NO POWER TRIPS, PLEASE.**

12. If you observe any behavior that is or may be illegal (possession of items that may be construed as weapons, adults showing an unusual interest in children, etc.) notify the Meet Referee or Meet Director at once. To remain in an area so that you can continue monitoring the individual (s), you may need to send someone else with a message. The Meet Referee and / or Meet Director, in consultation with facility personnel, will contact the appropriate law enforcement authorities, if necessary. **DO NOT INTERJECT** yourself into a potentially dangerous situation.

13. Know where the exit doors, first aid station, and flashlights are located. Know where the General Facility Rules are posted. Also, know where the AED (automatic external defibrillator) is located, if the facility has one.

14. As a Marshal, you should be present throughout the conduct of the session, from beginning of warm-ups to the completion of warm-downs at the end of the session. With two Marshals on deck, one Marshal should remain on the swimming pool deck attending to any behavior issues, while the other Marshal makes walking rounds through the venue, checking the bathrooms and locker rooms, adjacent gym or other gathering room(s), and any other spaces associated with the swimming pool venue.

15. When you take a break (and you will need one!!), make sure the other Marshal is aware of this and that she/he is in a position to cover you. Drink plenty of water, and do partake of the Host Team's Hospitality Room snacks.

Please remember your role is to help maintain a safe environment. **Please, Pay Attention!**

**Again, THANK YOU for serving as Marshal !!!**