

# Delmarva Swim Association

## Safety Training for Swim Coaches

The Delmarva Swim Association (DSA) has had a remarkable safety record over the past 20+ years, and it is mainly credited to the coaches. Swimming as a sport, is potentially far more like likely to see accidents due to the water environment in which they train. Coaches must be aware of the dangers involved in workouts, warm-ups, starts and turns as well as environmental dangers.

### **Facility issues:**

1. How deep is the starting end, 5 foot is required to go off the blocks, other wise use in water starts.
2. Does the pool have enough trained guards and the proper equipment for an emergency.
3. What is the facility / local policy for bad weather.
4. What is the chain of command at the pool, who do you contact, phone numbers.
5. Is there first aid equipment and does it have the necessary items to deal with a large array of accidents, is ice or a substitute available at both meets and practices.
6. Water quality needs to be monitored for off color, odors that may indicate over chemically treated or some other reasons to suspect that swimmers should not enter the pool.
7. Make sure that all electrical devices like radios, pace clocks etc are properly plugged in "ground fault outlets" (GFI) and that cords do not present a tripping hazard.
8. In case of power failure and loss of lighting, calmly get swimmers from the pool and deck and proceed to a safe place till the power returns.

### **Practice Issues:**

1. Feet first entry - in practice and warm-up No swimmers are to enter the pool till you are on deck and remain on deck till the last swimmer is out.
2. Practices using circle swimming - do not over load the lanes, swim counterclockwise, allow 5 seconds between swimmers to avoid end wall congestion where swimmers run into each other, teach passing, waiting etiquette for faster / slower swimmers. Be proactive and rearrange swimmers if you see them passing or bunching up.
3. Starts and Turns be especially careful that swimmers are not going too deep on starts and that enough space is maintained between starts. All swimmers must exit the pool on starts and do not circle swim back. Turns are especially dangerous in that swimmers can get hurt on the flip turn, hurting themselves or another swimmer at the wall.

**Practice Issues:**

4. Also in the turn swimmers can misjudge the distance and hit their head on the wall as well as push off the wall hitting the bottom in shallow pools.
5. Never train swimmers in starts to dive over stationary objects like kick boards or ropes, chest and rib injuries are likely.
6. Be mindful of slippery deck and starting block situations and remind swimmers to slow down and enter blocks carefully. Check the equipment your using, are the blocks safe, are the lane lines tight and have covers on the ratchets, is the rescue equipment within view.
7. What you do in practice will become what you do in a meet.

**Meet Issues:**

1. Be very watchful during warm-ups as swimmers are all doing different strokes and are more likely to run into each other or get hit in flip turns. A coach must directly supervise Lanes that are designated for sprint starts and swimmers must get out at the far end and walk back.
2. Teach your swimmers to step up on the blocks only when instructed to do so by the starter, and to exit the pool as quickly as possible when done so as not to hold up the next heat or event.

**Coaches:**

1. Every coach that is also the lifeguard, must be certified by the Red Cross or an equivalent certification. Even if you have lifeguards it is an excellent idea to be certified in case of multiple injuries.
2. Coaches must be aware of swimmers showing signs of distress, exhaustion, cramps, asthma, heart attach, epilepsy, heat stress, sunburn, etc can all lead to disaster. Recognize a swimmer is struggling and prevent accidents.
3. If a swimmer does become incapacitated follow all the life guarding procedures strictly.
4. Hydrate your swimmers especially in the outdoor pools in the full sun. Swimmers do sweat in the pool and can become dehydrated.

**Weather Issues:**

1. Lightning is seen, count one thousand one, one thousand two, etc till the thunder is heard, divide by one number less than what you counted for the distance in miles. E.g. six seconds is counted between lightning and thunder divide by 5, the storm is 1.2 miles away. Immediately clear the pool and deck until 30 min has passed without lightning or thunder. Get into a larger building or in your cars. Do not sit under umbrellas.

**Safety First:** As part of your summer parent meeting be sure to include what the procedures are for weather, power outages and swimmer accidents and what the chain of command is. Coaches and Parents put the safety of the team first. It is better to prevent accidents, but it is more important to be prepared for the unexpected.

**HAVE A SAFE FUN SUMMER SWIM SEASON**