

Safety Tip of the Month – December 2006
2006 VSI Safety Committee
“Marshal – So What?”

Have you every heard swim parents, coaches, or officials question “Why do we need Marshals?” or “All that Marshals have to do is to wear a brightly colored vest and stand or sit in a quiet place near the corner of the pool.”

As stated in the 2006 USA Swimming Rules and Regulations, 102.18, “Marshals shall wear identifying attire and enforce warm-up procedures and maintain order in the swimming venue. The marshal shall have full authority to warn or order to cease and desist, and with the concurrence of the Referee, to remove or have removed from the swimming venue anyone behaving in an unsafe manner or using profane or abusive language, or whose actions are damaging the orderly conduct of the meet.”

We have the [Marshal Job Description](#) and [Meet Safety Procedures](#) on the Virginia Swimming Web Site for your review. Marshals should arrive at their session at least 15 minutes before warm-ups start. For warm-ups, Marshals should stand at opposite ends of the starting blocks and make sure the swimmers enter the water safely. And yes, there is a requirement for at least TWO (2) marshals at every meet. The marshal should work with the coaches in turning lanes up to a sprint or pace status. Marshals are expected to identify actual or potential injuries on the deck, obtain first aid for the swimmer (from coach, Lifeguard, or parent who has a medical background). It is recommended that Marshals have access to a cell phone, and a low threshold to call 911 for observed injuries, acute illness, or criminal activity. Of course, the Marshal would also notify the Meet Referee and the facilities personnel for such observed activity.

Marshals should walk frequently through the entire venue in an effort to find areas of potential safety concerns. This includes walking through the bathrooms (will have to ask another adult to help with opposite gender bathroom), cruising through the gym or other area where swimmers may congregate, and being attentive to any unruly activity in the parking lot. Marshals have the authority and responsibility to ask any parties to stop any inappropriate behaviors. This includes towel fighting, playing with cigarette lighters, running on the pool deck, playing in off-limits areas (e.g. the Pump Room, offices, chlorine / chemicals storage areas, and trying to climb up the walls or roof of the swimming building. Do not laugh ... these activities have occurred at previous meets!

Marshals on deck should focus on unusual adult and swimmer behavior (stalkers have been known to come into the swimming venue), swimmers jumping into pool from side instead of start ends during warm-ups, and safe swimmer entry into the warm-up pool. The Marshal should know the location and names of the Lifeguards, and where the ambulance route would be for evacuation of an injured swimmer.

The Marshals are an inherent part of any swim meet. It is recommended that the Meet Referee or her / his designee goes over expectations / responsibilities of the Marshals just prior to warm-ups. It is also prudent to recognize Marshals in your Meet Program and ensure that they are valued by the officials and coaches on deck. Marshals are here to ensure the safety of our swimmers and participants at meets and we need to be sure to support the Marshals.