

OPEN WATER SAFETY PLAN

Event Information:

Madison Open Water Swim (MOWS) hosted by Wisconsin Masters Aquatic Club-Madison Area Masters. The event is an open water 1.2 mile and 2.4 mile swim in Lake Monona, Madison, Wisconsin on August 15, 2015. This is part of Wisconsin Masters Swim Committee, Inc., in the Great Lakes Zone.

The event director is Suzi Green, greensuzi@ameritech.net 608-576-8215. The event referee is Cathie Marty cathie.marty@gmail.com 608-220-0152. The safety director is Dick Pitman dickpitman@hotmail.com 608-770-2307.

The City of Madison maintains a webpage with beach information, including information on bacteria levels. The website is www.cityofmadison.com/parks/facilities/beaches.cfm. Dane County also maintains a website at www.publichealthmdc.com/environmental/water/beaches. The site is updated regularly as needed during the beach/swim season. The event organizers will monitor the websites for information.

The pre-race officials meeting will be held the morning of the race at about 7:30am. The safety director will advise the officials on any known hazards of the event, and will review whistle signals, evacuation plans, and time limits for the event. The pre-race swimmer meeting will be held at 8am the day of the race. The event director will review the start and finish procedures, the course map, water conditions, emergency procedures, and the procedure for leaving the event early.

Event Conditions:

The expected air temperature is expected to range from 65 to 70 F at the start of the event. The water temperature is expected to be between 74 and 79 F, giving a combined temperature of about 145 F. Wetsuits are optional (different waves), but will be disallowed if the water temperature exceeds 78 F. The event is in a fresh water lake, which is public. The water depth is about 20 -40 feet throughout. Two City of Madison pontoon boats will be stationed at the outer corners, and a Coast Guard Auxiliary boat and another power boat (with a propeller guard) will patrol the backside of the course, keeping other motor craft away from entering the area. The pontoon boats, power boat, and Coast Guard boat operators will have radios, which will also be carried by the event director, safety director, and other key personnel. There are no unusual water hazards, except perhaps for some small rocks at the exit, which will be covered by a mat.

The course is marked by four blaze orange corner buoys, about 8 feet in diameter. The body of the course is marked by blaze orange buoys, about 2.5 feet in diameter, which are spaced about every 275 yards. The middle of the long sections is a plain small red rubber "bouncy toy" inverted. There are no feeding or watering stations on the actual course.

Event Safety:

There will be both an MD (TBA) and an RN (Abbi Dunning) on site. In past years, we have had a trained Urgent Care MD, and hope to have her back this year. We will also have an ambulance on site, owned either by the City of Madison or privately owned. Both the MD and the RN have been on site for this event before. The medical personnel on the course will all be lifeguards, certified by the American Red Cross (or equivalent). There will be 10-12 lifeguards scattered equally around the course, and will be on paddleboards so that they may be able to observe the water easily. There will be an ambulance on site, with another on call. The nearest hospital is about three minutes away. Local officials will be notified of the event in case of an unforeseen disaster. The nearest medical facility is Meriter Hospital, 202 S. Park St, Madison 608-417-6000. It is about 1 mile and 2 minutes away.

There will be one motorized boat (with propeller guard) in the outside of the course. The referee will be on the boat. All other craft will be kayaks/canoes and paddleboards. About 20 volunteers will be scattered around the course on kayaks/canoes. They will be available to assist swimmers if necessary. Lifeguards will be on paddleboards. The kayaks/canoes will have brightly colored "swim noodles" to notify a lifeguard if one is needed.

Each swimmer will receive a numbered neon-colored swim cap, which is required to be worn. The 1.2 mile swimmers and 2.4 mile swimmers have different colored caps. In addition, each swimmer has a timing chip which is strapped around his/her ankle. The chip serves to determine who has crossed the timing pad, and thusly who had entered/exited the water. All swimmers will be "scanned" and entered into the computer as they cross the pad before entering the water. When the swimmer crosses the pad at the finish, another "scan" is done. Swimmers are instructed to notify event staff immediately if they leave the water early or lose a chip.

There will be a monitored warm-up before the event in a small area near the start. Swimmers must exit the water before the race to listen to the pre-race briefing and to get "scanned" upon water entry for the event. There will be volunteer scuba divers stationed on the pontoons to search for any swimmer who is feared missing. All event staff will have radios to communicate with other event staff, officials, and the boater.

The maximum number of swimmers on the course will be 500. There are no race day entries. The lifeguards and safety staff are spread equally around the course, with perhaps a little more concentration of a large "clump" of swimmers. The lifeguard will either see or hear the swimmer, or be notified by the kayaker/canoer that assistance is needed. The canoe/kayak can rapidly reach the swimmer, giving at least something to hang onto. Scuba divers are onsite to assist in searching for someone, if necessary. The radios have a weather channel, and many people will have phones capable of getting weather information. In the event of impending or current unsafe conditions, the event will be delayed for up to an hour. If, after an hour, the event cannot be swum, it will be cancelled. As the swim is a long rectangle parallel to the shore, no swimmer will be more than a couple of hundred yards away from shore. There are several exits onto the shore, and any swimmer in distress can be easily moved to the dock area, which is safely away from the course.

