

**TRIATHLON NOVA SCOTIA
OPEN WATER SWIM PRACTICE SAFETY and EMERGENCY
PLAN POLICY**

Adopted by TNS Board of Directors
[February 24, 2015]

NOVA SCOTIA TRIATHLON ASSOCIATION
OPEN WATER SWIM PRACTICE SAFETY and EMERGENCY PLAN POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Open water swimming can be unpredictable due to conditions such as, the vagaries of the environmental and the individual swimmer's level of competence and confidence.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to triathlon clubs, sanctioned by Triathlon Nova Scotia (TNS), on preparing an *Open Water Swim Practice Safety and Emergency Plan* as part of the sanction package required by TNS. The purpose of the *Open Water Swim Practice Safety and Emergency Plan* is to allow for on-water safety personnel to react to a need for assistance within 10 seconds and be able to reach a disabled swimmer within an additional 20 seconds.

AUTHORITY

Section 11.1 of TNS Bylaws, Appendix 3 (Jan. 01, 2012) provides authority for the Board of Directors to "...set policy to guide the management of the association...".

APPLICATION

Protecting athletes is the ultimate responsibility of the practice organizers. Individual triathlon clubs holding open water swim practices are required to prepare and enforce an *Open Water Swim Practice Safety and Emergency Plan* as part of the club sanction package required by TNS.

PREPARING AN OPEN WATER SWIM PRACTICE SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PLAN

"An Emergency Action Plan helps you react quickly, efficiently and responsibly in a stressful situation." In addition, the plan must be "specific to your athletes' needs, team and facility." (NCCP, 2015).

The safety and emergency plan should include the following elements:

- Identify and outline the duties of the swim practice Safety Officer.
- Outline the procedure to ensure that all swimmers are accounted for at all times.
- Detail the ratios of safety personnel to swimmers.
- Provide details of the safety communications plan to be followed at all open water practices.

At a minimum, the plan must provide for water-to-water, water-to-land, and land-to-water communications. Furthermore, personnel on all boats and safety craft must have the ability to communicate with the safety officer and the safety officer must be able to communicate with first responders, safety personnel.

- An evacuation procedure to ensure that, if required, professional help is available as quickly as possible.
- Outline the elements of a pre-swim technical briefing.

This should include, at least, descriptions of water conditions, water entry/exit points, safety plan, emergency situations, the safety communications plan, evacuation plan, and safety craft.

- A post-incident report must be filed with the TNS Executive Director within 24 hours of the occurrence. This should include:
 - Description of the incident.
 - Procedures followed during the incident, including names of all involved.
 - Any changes, if necessary, made to the club *Open Water Swim Practice Safety and Emergency Plan* to ensure that a similar incident does not occur.
 - Any recommendations for amendments to this TNS policy.

DOCUMENT PREPARATION

This document was prepared with input from:

NCCP. 2015. Planning a practice. National Coaching Certification Program.
http://www.coach.ca/files/PLANNING_PPT_EN_2013.pdf Accessed Jan. 21, 2015.

Open Water Swimming Safety Guide for Multi-Sport Events. <http://www.triathlonscotland.org/files/British-Triathlon-Open-Water-Swimming-Safety-Guidelines-08.pdf> . Accessed Nov. 8, 2014.

Open Water Swimming Event: Pre-event planning checklist.
[http://www.usaswimming.org/_Rainbow/Documents/899d12ae-4db3-417d-b981-15ce05e095fc/Safety%20Checklist%20\(Athletes\).pdf](http://www.usaswimming.org/_Rainbow/Documents/899d12ae-4db3-417d-b981-15ce05e095fc/Safety%20Checklist%20(Athletes).pdf) . Accessed Nov. 8, 2014.

Open Water Review Commission Recommendations. April 12, 2011.
http://www.usaswimming.org/_Rainbow/Documents/7446603a-b37d-44eb-b8c2-18b5eece7ca3/Open%20Water%20Review%20Commission%20Recommendations.pdf . Accessed Nov. 8, 2014.

Open Water Swim Safety: Fran Crippen and Recommendations from USA Swimming. Larry Creswell. August 16, 2012. Accessed Nov. 8, 2014.