



Open Water Safety Plan

Application Instructions

- Before applying for a USMS open water sanction, event hosts must review their event information and safety plans with their LMSC Sanctioning Officer. Upon approval from the LMSC Sanctioning Officer, the event host is then ready to apply for sanction.
- When applying for a USMS open water sanction, event hosts are required to submit their safety plan for review and approval by the Open Water Compliance Coordinator (OWCC) ON THIS APPLICATION through the online sanction process. We welcome additional supporting information—after all, many event hosts have developed extensive safety plans over years of hosting events—but everyone must submit this completed application to ensure that all pertinent points are covered in safety planning.
- Using a Google Earth map or equivalent, event hosts are also required to upload a map of the venue and course with the safety plan application. Maps must include locations of start & finish, guide & turn buoys, feeding stations, safety craft, lifeguards/first responders, on-site medical care, and evacuation points.
- In the best scenario, the Safety Director should assist the event host in the developing the event safety plan. If the Safety Director did not take part in developing of the safety plan (usually in the case of appointment after the sanction request or in the case of a substantially unchanged safety plan developed over years of experience), the event host must give the Safety Director a copy of the approved safety plan.
- Upon request, USMS OWCC David Miner will send you a copy of the approved safety plan. Contact David at openwateradvisor@usmastersswimming.org or 941-545-9709.

Open Water Safety Plan Application

Event Information

General Information

Name of Host: Sierra Nevada Masters
Name of Event: Donner Lake Swim
Event Location: Donner Lake
City: Truckee State: CA LMSC: Pacific
Event Dates: 8/8/2026 through 8/8/2026
Length of Swim(s): 2.7 miles
Dual Sanctioned with USA-Swimming: No

Key Event Personnel

Event Director: Laura Harsh Phone: 775-843-1477 E-mail: donnerlakeswim@gmail.com
Referee: Steve Lintz Phone: 775-224-1538 E-mail: swimsteve0905@gmail.com
Certified Safety Director: Bill Roth Phone: (775) 432-3719 E-mail: billysap@rtci.net

Pre-Race Safety Meeting (required): all officials & safety personnel must attend

Tentative date: 8/6/2026 Time: 7:00 pm

Tentative agenda: Communication, swimmer rescue, course patrol and assign boats position on the swim course, contact information with the safety director, race director and police boat.

Pre-Race Swimmer Meeting (required): all officials & swimmers must attend to participate in race

Tentative date: 8/8/2026 Time: 08:15am

Tentative agenda: Welcome, sponsors, water temperature, review rules for swimmers, start and finish instructions

Course & Event Conditions

The Course

Body of water: Lake Water type: Fresh Water Water depth from: 0 to: 238ft

Course: Open - non-event watercraft allowed near swim course

If open course, indicate the agency used to control the traffic while swimmers are on the course.

Agency name: Truckee Police Department How to contact during event: 911, officer's phone number on boat

Expected water conditions for the swimmers: (marine life, tides, currents, underwater hazards): None

How is the course marked?

- Turn buoy(s): Height(s) NA Color(s) NA Shape(s) N/A
- Guide buoy(s): Height(s) NA Color(s) NA Shape(s) N/A
- Approximate Distance between Guide buoys: N/A

Number of Feeding Stations: 0

Type of structure(s) used as feeding station(s): N/A

Number of people the structure(s) can safely hold: N/A

Water & Air Temperatures

Expected air temp range: 40-85

Expected water temp range: 65-68

Wetsuits: Optional

USMS Water Temperature Index for sanctioned open water events:

- Below 57°F (Very Cold) – heat retaining swimwear and a Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is **REQUIRED**
- 57°F-60°F (Cold) - heat-retaining swimwear is required or a Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is **REQUIRED**
- 60°F-66°F (Quite cool) - Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is **RECOMMENDED**
- 66°F-72°F (Fairly cool) - Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims is **ENCOURAGED**
- 72°F-78°F (Cool) - No Thermal Plan required
- 78°F-82°F (Optimal) - Heat-retaining swimwear & neoprene caps are not permitted above 78°F.
- 82°F-85°F (Warm) - Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims is **RECOMMENDED**
- 85°F-87.8°F (Very warm) - Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims is **REQUIRED**
- 87.8°F-95°F (Hot) - Sanctioned open water swims cannot be held
- Over 95°F (Extremely hot) - Any swimming is ill-advised

USMS Water Temperature Measurement Procedure: Using an accurate thermometer, the event host should take three to five measurements at various places on the course—12 to 18 inches below the water surface and no closer to the shore than 25 meters (if possible)—within one hour before the start of an open water swim. The host should average these measurements, post and/or announce the resulting average temperature at least 30 minutes before the start of the swim, and announce it during the pre-race staff safety and swimmers' meetings.

Water Quality

It is recommended that one week before the event, check water quality. If results returned are inconsistent with the local governing body's standards, notify swimmers who participated in the event of any known exposures post-race. If an exceptional event such as heavy rain or flooding affects the water quality, the Event Director, Referee, or Safety Director shall have the authority to postpone or cancel the race. It is recommended to take and retain water samples on race day and retain for reference.

Donner Lake is a mountain lake and due to temperature does not have water quality issues. Truckee Water Authority currently has the water rights.

Event Safety

Medical Personnel

Lead medical personnel (emergency trained) on site: Vibeth Atenzia, NP

Experience in sporting events (Marathon, Triathlon, Open water swim, etc.): Yes

Will medical personnel be located on the course? No

The number of medical personnel will be dependent on the course layout, number of swimmers in the water, expected conditions, etc. How many medical personnel do you plan to have on site? 2

First Responders/Lifeguards & Monitors

Indicate the qualifications of the first responders: Un-certified

Number on course: 40

Number on land: 6

Indicate their location on the Race Plan Map.

Onsite Medical Care & Facilities

Describe onsite set up for medical care, such as medical treatment tent, heating/cooling tent or facility. etc., and indicate locations on the Race Plan Map. Medical tent will be at the finish

Ambulance/Emergency Transportation & Nearby Medical Facilities

Ambulance(s) onsite: Truckee Fire Protection District On Call: 530-582-7850

Have you spoken with local emergency response agency regarding potential emergencies? Yes

Closest medical facility: Tahoe Forest Hospital

Phone: 530-587-6011

Type of medical facility (urgent care, hospital, etc.): Hospital

Distance to closest medical facility: 5-10 miles Approximate transport time: 10-12 minutes

Watercraft

Motorized Watercraft:

- Owned/operated by government agencies (Coast Guard, police, fire & rescue, etc.): 1
- Owned/operated by volunteers or hired individuals: 6

Will all motorized watercraft with a propeller owned/operated by volunteers or hired individuals be equipped either with a propeller guard or a swimmer monitor? Yes

Other motorized watercraft:

- With propellers fore of the rudder: 2
- With impeller motor (jet ski, jet boat): 4
- Anchored from start to finish: 0

Allocation of Watercraft:

- Safety Watercraft:
 - 1st Responders: Motorized: 1 Non-motorized: 0
 - 2nd Responders: Motorized: **6** Non-motorized: **30**
- Watercraft for race officials: Motorized: 1 Non-motorized: 0
- Watercraft for race supervision: Motorized: 6 Non-motorized: 30
- Watercraft for feeding stations: Motorized: 0 Non-motorized: 0
- Watercraft for escorted events: Motorized: 0 Non-motorized: 0
- Other event watercraft: 0

Emergency Signal Flag Color for all watercraft: orange

Communications

Primary method between event officials: Cell Phone Secondary method: Megaphone/Bullhorn

Primary method between medical personnel, first responders & safety craft: Radio (separate channel from Meet Officials)

Secondary method: Cell Phone

Swimmer Counting & Accountability

Describe method of swimmer body numbering: : Left arm

Describe method of electronic identification of swimmer (Recommended): Timing chip ankle

Describe different bright cap colors for various divisions (Recommended): Orange, pink, green, yellow

Describe method of accounting for all swimmers before, during and after swim(s): This is done with collaboration between the race director, safety director, and timing company. Prior to the start of the race, the timing company will have a list of all the swimmers who checked in with a total number of swimmers that will be entering the water. During pre-race instructions participants will be directed to go to the timing tent at the finish if they fail to start or finish the race.

Describe method of accounting for swimmers who do not finish: The start will have one board member on the beach observing for any swimmers who do not start the race or start and who come back to shore. This board member will write the non-starting swimmer's name and race number on a list. This list will be given to the timing company at the finish. If a swimmer is pulled from the water during the race, the boat will call the Safety Director via cell phone to report the swimmers name, race number and condition. The safety director will in turn give this information to the timing company and ambulance if EMS care is needed. If the swimmer is experiencing a medical emergency boaters are instructed to call 911. One monitor will be placed at the finish by the timing company tent to monitor for swimmers being dropped off or swimmers who approach the timing tent who did not start or finish the race.

Warm-up/Warm-down Safety Plan

Describe safety plan for warm-up/warm-down, include number and location of lifeguards and designated watercraft. A designated warm-up area will be provided for swimmers. The warm up area will be patrolled by 4 kayakers from 7:30 until 8:15. All swimmers wishing to warm-up prior to the race must do so in the designated warm-up area. Warm down will be at West End Beach recreation swim area that is roped off.

Swimmer Management

Maximum number of swimmers on course at a time: 475

If more swimmers show up on the day of the swim(s), how will you adjust the safety plan to accommodate the increased number of entries? No race day entry if sold out

How will you deploy the safety staff and crafts distributed to supervise this event to ensure swift recognition, rescue, and treatment of any swimmer? Kayakers are assigned positions to guide the swimmers with half of the kayaks located to the right of swimmers (north side) and the remaining half to the left of swimmers (south side). These volunteer kayaks are also divided into groups patrolling the leading third of the swimmers, the middle third of swimmers, and the rest of the swimmers. One kayak will be placed at the back of the swimmers. The motorized boats will be assigned positions similar to the volunteer kayakers with one boat near the leading group of swimmers on the right (north) side, one near the middle group of swimmers on the left (south) side, and one boat at the back of the swimmers on the left (south) side.

How will you deploy the safety staff to maximize rapid response to a troubled swimmer? A kayaker will notify the nearest power boat by using a man-in-the-water flag that a swimmer requires a non-medical rescue. Kayaker will escort the swimmer outside the swim course, if the area is congested with other swimmers, and wait for the motorized boat to pick up the swimmer. Assist swimmer onto the boat and keep the swimmer on board until docked at race finish. If the boat needs to drop off swimmers to the race finish due to too many swimmers on board, the boat will communicate with the nearest boat, along with the Safety Coordinator, to inform them they are moving from position. This boat will then transport swimmers to the finish and move back to their designated position as quickly as possible. If the swimmer is having a medical emergency the kayaker or boater will call 911 and directions will be given by EMS.

How will you alter the event if insufficient safety personnel/craft are available on the day of the swim(s)? If we do not have adequate safety then event will be canceled.

Describe your missing swimmer plan: The Truckee Police Department will run the rescue if there is a missing swimmer.

Severe Weather Plan

Is a lightning detector or weather radio available on site? No

Describe your plan for severe weather or natural disaster: The certified Safety Director and/or Race Committee members may cancel the event. This could be due to thunder, lightning, and/or turbulent water due to wind.

Describe your course and site evacuation plan, including accounting for all swimmers and other participants: In the event that the swim is cancelled during the race, motor boats and wave-runners will be notified via cell phone. The motor boats and wave-runners will then pass the cancellation notice on to the kayakers. The motor boats (staying out of the race course) and kayakers will work together to evacuate swimmers to the shore on the north side of the lake. The shuttle bus will leave the finish and drive east on Donner Pass Road and pick up evacuated swimmers and bring them to the finish. Two volunteers will wait at the finish for the shuttle and write down race numbers as participants exit the shuttle. If swimmers are closer to the finish than to exiting the north side of the lake they will exit via the finish and be accounted for by the timing company.

Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims

General Information

Thermal Plan for Cold Water Swims: USMS Rules for Open Water Swims state:

302.2.2A (1) A swim shall not begin if the water temperature is less than 60° F. (15.6° C.), unless heat-retaining swimwear is required of all swimmers or a USMS-approved thermal plan is in place.

302.2.2A (2) A swim in which heat retaining swimwear is required of all swimmers shall not begin if the water temperature is less than 57° F. (13.9° C.), unless a USMS-approved thermal plan is in place.

Remember that the average masters swimmer does little or no acclimatization to cold water, so even a small drop in water temperature—especially in the colder ranges—dramatically increases the odds of thermal issues: Cold Shock Response, Cold Incapacitation, Hypothermia, and Circum-rescue Collapse). Be Prepared!

- If your swim course has a remote chance of water temperature less than 60° F., you are **REQUIRED** to complete the thermal plan below, showing your specific commitment to increased swimmer preparation before the event, reduced swimmer exposure during the event, and maximize mitigation & treatment of thermal issues during & after the event.

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 60° F & 66° F., a thermal plan is **RECOMMENDED**.

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 66° F & 72° F., a thermal plan is **ENCOURAGED**.

How will you assist swimmer preparation before the event:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Emphasize & stress on entry information of possible cold water swim conditions.
2. Recommend prior cold water swim experience.

What method(s) of swimmer preparation will you take: Emphasize and stress on entry information and pre-race instructions regarding cold water swim conditions.

What action will you take to reduce swimmer exposure to thermal issues:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Cancel the swim if temperature drops
2. Encourage wetsuits for swimmers.

Explain your plan of action: If water temperature less than 60 degrees then wetsuits will be required.

What extra medical care will you provide to mitigate & treat symptoms of thermal issues:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. First aid tent at finish with trained medical personnel
2. Ambulance available at finish if care of swimmer needs to be escalated from first aid tent to ambulance
3. Warm beverages available at first aid tent and hospitality
4. Blankets and towels available at first aid tent
5. Instant hot packs

Specify what extra listed items you will provide: Warm beverages at the finish, blankets/towels at the finish, blankets/towels on the boats if cold swimmers rescued

Comment on how you will be prepared to care for multiple medical issues: If more than one ambulance is needed 911 dispatch will send. If ambulance has to transport swimmer another ambulance will come to be on stand-by

If the water temperature is below 72° F, will you be prepared to deal with cold water medical issues: Yes

Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims

General Information

Thermal Plan for Warm Water Swims: USMS Rule 302.2.2A(3) for Open Water Swims states:

“A swim of 5K or greater shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 29.45° C. (85°F.). A swim of less than 5K shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 31° C. (87.8°F.).”

Remember that the average masters swimmer does little or no acclimatization to warm water, so even a small increase in water temperature—especially in the warmer ranges—dramatically increases the odds of thermal issues: Dehydration, Heat Stroke, and Hyperthermia. Be Prepared!

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature from 85° F to 87.8° F, you are **REQUIRED** to complete the thermal plan below, showing your specific commitment to increased swimmer preparation before the event, reduced swimmer exposure during the event, and maximize mitigation & treatment of thermal issues during & after the event.

- If your swim course has a chance of water temperature between 82° F & 85° F., a thermal plan is **RECOMMENDED**.

How will you assist swimmer preparation before the event:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Emphasize & stress on entry information of possible warm water swim conditions.
2. Require prior warm water swim experience.
3. Require swimmer warm water preparation plan.

What method(s) of swimmer preparation will you take: Do not anticipate warm water.

What action will you take to reduce swimmer, official, and staff exposure to heat-related issues:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Cancel the swim(s).
2. Shorten swim(s) or institute/shorten time limits.
3. Remind all participants to stay well hydrated.

4. Remind swimmers to select appropriate pace.
5. Make swim caps optional or use Lycra swim caps.

Explain your plan of action: [Click here to enter text.](#)

What extra medical care will you provide to mitigate & treat symptoms of heat-related issues:

The following methods are among the ways you can do this:

1. Bring in more emergency trained medical personnel and/or ambulances.
2. Bring in more volunteers to assist medical personnel.
3. Bring in more emergency craft and first responders on the course.
4. Increase cool beverages before, during and after the swim (for swimmers and staff, including extra cool beverages on watercraft and feeding stations)
5. Increase heat exhaustion and heat stroke treatment gear (iced water, ice chips, cold water bottles, misting tents/fans, etc.)
6. Make cool showers available on-site.
7. Make shade and cooling facilities (buildings, tents, etc.) available on-site.
8. Other: [Specify](#)

Specify what extra listed items you will need to provide: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Comment on how you will be prepared to care for multiple medical issues: [Click here to enter text.](#)

If the water temperature is above 82° F, will you be prepared to deal with heat-related medical issues:
[Click here to enter text.](#)