



## LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN



Another loss prevention service from Bollinger, Inc.

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### SWIMMING COMPETITIONS #108

#### Introduction

When a club's swimming pool is used for competitive events such as swim meets, people unfamiliar with the layout of the club grounds, rules, and regulations may enter the club property. These events increase the chances for the occurrence of vehicle accidents in the parking areas of the club, slips and falls or other injuries to pool users and spectators, or damage to their property. The club may be held liable for these injuries or property damage.

Normal operation and safety procedures for the club in general, and the pool in particular (refer to Loss Control Bulletin #107), should always be followed for these events. There are several additional factors the club must consider to protect its property and reduce the chances of accidents or injuries during swimming competitions.

#### Pool Configuration and Equipment

Pool design (dimensions, construction materials, auxiliary equipment, etc.) must meet certain specifications for both the safety of swimmers and the sanctioning of competitive events. Several national organizations as well as all states and many local governments have regulations governing pool construction and operation. US Swimming and FINA (Federation Internationale de Natation Amateur) are the sanctioning bodies for competitive swimming events.

In most swim meet events the racers will enter the pool by diving from the edge of the pool or from an elevated starting block. Swimmers may start in the shallow end (water depth 3 to 5 feet) of the pool, where diving may not normally be permitted during routine recreational use of the pool. The execution of a "racing dive" by the swimmers does reduce the risk of striking the bottom of the pool, but the depth of the pool in the starting area must still meet certain requirements.

The requirements for pool depth and starting block height listed in the US Swimming Rule Book, Rule 103.3.3 are as follows:

- (A) For National Championship events, water depth must be 2 meters throughout the racing course.
- (B) For all other competitions, for racing starts during competition and practice, water depth requirements shall apply for a distance of 3 feet 3 and 1/2 inches (1 meter) to 16 feet 5 inches (5 meters) from the end wall. Starting area water depth requirements and height of starting blocks shall be:
  - (1) In pools with water depth less than 3 feet 6 inches (1.07 meters) at the starting end, the swimmer must start from the deck or from within the water.

- (2) In pools with water depth of 3 feet 6 inches (1.07 meters) to less than 4 feet (1.22 meters) at the starting end, starting platforms shall be no higher than 18 inches (0.46 meter) above the water surface.
- (3) In pools with water depth of 4 feet (1.22 meters) or more at the starting end, starting platforms shall meet the height requirements of Section 103.2.3.

**Important Note:** Local and state statutes, ordinances, rules, and regulations may have depth limitations in conflict with Section 103.2.3 of the US Swimming rules. Since these regulations will vary from area to area, and are subject to change, check all applicable regulations and apply the most conservative specifications. If local or state codes have changed since the pool was built, the regulations may include "grandfather" provisions allowing existing pools to operate under the old specifications.

All other equipment used in conjunction with the swim meet should conform to USA Swimming specifications.

## **Spectator Areas**

Pools that host swimming competitions typically have areas for spectators to watch the event. These areas may be within the pool perimeter, if it is in a separate area segregated from the space used by the swimmers. Spectator seating should be constructed to building code standards. Existing bleachers should be retrofit to CPSC recommendations (available on-line via <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/330.pdf>). Bleachers should be regularly inspected and maintained. Food and drink, if provided at the club, should not be permitted in the pool area and must be served in non-breakable containers. Separate rest room facilities for persons in street clothes should also be available.

## **Parking Lots**

The increased number of people at the club during swim meets may overload the parking areas of the club near the pool. Proper layout of the parking area will reduce the chance of parking lot accidents.

Parking lots should be designed without wheel stops or speed bumps. Gratings, posts, obstructions, or other changes of surface should be clearly marked. Designated walkways or sidewalks should be provided. Sidewalks should meet building code requirements and should not be obstructed with shrubbery or debris. The parking lot should be well lighted.

The parking lot should be posted with signs or markings indicating where vehicles are to travel, and other appropriate signs and warnings, such as safe speed limits or warnings about the presence of speed bumps or other obstructions. The markings should be easily visible and understandable.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by Bollinger Inc. in this Loss Control Bulletin are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your club, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related, or other, laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter them to fit the specific hazards of your club and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and club's policies.**

For bulletins on other safety topics see our website [www.bollingerinsurance.com/newver/Golf/index.asp](http://www.bollingerinsurance.com/newver/Golf/index.asp)