

I have read the NY State Return to Sports guidelines and would like bring up items the specifically deal with swimming and diving officials. My job as the president of the Long Island Swimming Officials Association, in addition to providing to Section XI certified, competent swimming and diving referees and starters, is to ensure that those officials are safe when they are on the high school pool decks.

As you probably know, swimming has the oldest average-age officials in high school sports. Our roster has five eighty-year-olds, eight seventy-year-olds and 61% of our officials are over 60 years of age. Most have not left their homes in six months now. So even though the Covid concerns apply to everyone, many of our members are in the higher risk category.

We surveyed our members and not one of our members responded that they would not be officiating - but 55% responded they will decide when the time comes and will officiate if they are comfortable for their safety.

To help make our swimming and diving officials comfortable with their decision to return, in addition to the NYSPHSAA guidelines, I would like us to also consider some recommendations from NFHS, USA Swimming, the CDC and OSHA along with what the NYSPHSAA is mandating:

As you know, Swimming and Diving competitions are conducted sometimes in small, confined, closed spaces. Some have very little deck space. When the two teams are even sitting in the bleachers, they will be right on the decks, very close to the officials.

Increase air flow - USA Swimming and OSHA recommend trying to increase the airflow to the indoor, enclosed swimming pools. I know this is a problem - some schools are vigilant to keep the exit doors locked tight for security reasons and also in fear of citations from the County Department of Health - both valid reasons. However, as a Covid safety measure - can we communicate with the schools and even the county to allow the outside doors to be open to increase the airflow into the pool areas during a 1½-hour swim meet? I can contact County Executive Curran's office if you would like me to help with that.

Swimming pool chlorine levels at least 2.0 - CDC Guidelines mandate 1.0-3.0 ppm chlorine levels for a public swimming pool. USA swimming is recommending at least 2.0 for swim practices and swim meets to maintain safety during this virus. I would like to assure my members that the pools that they work will have chlorine levels at least at that level.

Sanitizing wipes at the scorer's table - keeping things clean, that multiple people might have access to, is important.

On deck tape guidelines - X's or boxes as floor markings, to indicate the spacing plan, would be helpful to keep things orderly and safe.

Temperature Checks - Is there a way that temperatures can be taken upon entering the pool area? Individual Health questions too (like they do at doctors and dentist offices) asking about symptoms, current health, etc.?

Sickness during the event plan - I have not seen and am wondering if there is a plan if someone becomes ill during a swim meet - who and what kind of aid is administered. Is it different now than it was six months ago?

Enforcement - Officials are not supposed to enforce the distancing and mask wearing requirements. If the protective measures are not adhered to, it jeopardizes the health of the officials. My understanding of the NYSPHSAA guidelines is that the coaches are responsible for their athletes following the regulations. Could the supervisors that travel with the away team and those on site for the home team also assist that process? The coaches sometimes get so involved with the competition that they might not pay as much attention to the rest of the team that are sitting impatiently in the stands. Just a thought to make sure that everyone is helping everyone else be safe.

Questionnaires - I would like to provide a checklist for the Referee to use prior to the start of the meet to assure them that the meet will be conducted safely.

- What is the pool area maximum attendance limit (athletes, coaches, timers, officials, spectators)
- People on the deck and when (only current event swimmers, coaches, officials, counters for the 500 yd.)
- Area wipe down and cleaning schedule
- Water Chlorine level
- Rest room usage

We will strongly encourage our officials to arrive wearing their uniforms and not arrive too early.

I understand that you are inundated with things to do at this time. Thank you for your consideration of these items. We would like to work together with you to provide the athletes fair and safe swimming and diving meets and also make sure that our officials are kept healthy.

Sincerely,

George Fleckenstein

President

Long Island Swimming Officials Association