

**SWIM
IRELAND**

**Swim Ireland Open Water Swimming
COVID-19 Return to Water Framework – Open
Water Events (July 2020)**

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**Me and
the water**

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Introduction

Following the Government of Ireland's publication of the 'Roadmap for Reopening Society & Business' on Friday 1st May 2020 and the Northern Ireland Executive's publication of the 'Coronavirus Executive Approach to Decision-Making' on 12th May 2020, Swim Ireland produced a Roadmap as to how aquatic activities may be resumed on the island of Ireland on a phased basis. As Swim Ireland gain clarity on a number of issues within each Government's published guidelines, the recommendations and guidelines within this Roadmap have already begun to alter and will continue to be updated accordingly. Swim Ireland have been working with England, Scotland and Wales as part of a 'Four Nations Working Group' on these matters and have also observed and studied closely that which would currently be seen as best practice by other European nations.

This is Swim Ireland's specific guidance document issued in relation to Open Water Racing during this time. Please note that this document is aimed at events taking place in the Republic of Ireland. Northern Ireland guidelines don't currently lend themselves to the organisation of races. The document will be updated when these change

Context

These guidelines are applicable for the events taking place following with approval by the local councils, landowners etc. Swim Ireland is putting the health and safety of all athletes, volunteers, officials and organising committee staff, first. Within these guidelines you will find points that may be applied to any event taking place immediately after a staged phase is lifted and so long as it is deemed appropriate by the Organising Committee (OC), Swim Ireland, Government, HSE/HSC and the local councils.

Event Organisers will be required to complete an event planning template and submit this to Swim Ireland before the event can be sanctioned – organisers who host more than one event will only be required to submit the plan for their first event

The guidelines will be updated continuously according to the latest information from the Government, HSE, Sport Ireland and Sport NI

We need to look at conducting races in a safer way for the participants, the organising committee, and the spectators. We need to adapt to new ideas which should be shared among the entire swimming family for everyone's benefit. The health and safety everyone involved must remain a priority. Event organisers must put preventative measures in place to stop the transmission of infection and mitigation measures to minimise the risk of infection

Fundamental Decisions Required Before Returning to Water

1. COMPLIANCE WITH CURRENT COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS – Swim Ireland clubs and members need to make themselves aware of COVID-19 restrictions that exist at the time of returning to water
2. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY – Each person is to take personal responsibility for their own health, safety and decision making; it is of foremost importance that any person who thinks they may be symptomatic should stay at home and not partake in activity until cleared to do so
3. RISK ASSESSMENT – Individuals, clubs and the associated workforce must ensure that they have assessed the risks associated with the conditions, the equipment, and the experience which lies with going back swimming

Organising Committees must appoint a COVID-19 Officer/Committee to ensure compliance with this guidance and Governmental directive, to establish the groups referenced above and to ensure that Contact Tracing is enabled as follows:

Contact Tracing

A key point in public health measures is to ensure that there are clear records at all times of who was in the water at each event and who else was present (as part of the event organisation, e.g. Officials, volunteers, safety personnel). These records should be kept digitally in order that they can be transferred easily. This is vitally important to ensure that contact tracing is provided for in the event of a case of the virus presenting itself in one of the Club members.

Participants must ensure that they are fully cognisant of the following recommendations and advices, in association with any other conditions and requirements set by Swim Ireland, Sport Ireland, the HSE/HSC and/or the Government in the return to Open Water swimming. It is important that the below recommendations do not supersede any Government/HSE/Irish Coast Guard/HSC/ directives in relation to restriction of movement and/or access to bodies of water

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While the current HSE/HSC advice in relation to the impact of COVID-19 in open water (freshwater and saltwater) suggests that the risk of transmission of the virus through water is low, this is still under investigation. The HSE National Bathing Water Group regularly review and update their guidance relating to Bathing Water and Health. There has been no specific assessment to date on the viability of the virus on water sport clothing or equipment however it is recommended that all equipment is stored in well ventilated areas and are frequently disinfected to reduce any potential risk of transmission.

This Open Water Racing Framework is designed to help minimise any risk but cannot remove risk completely

Phase 3 - Events

- Events can resume; mass gatherings of up to 200 people are permitted *but we still await confirmation as to whether this applies to participants, spectators or both*
- Limitations to be placed on the number of spectators and where social distancing can be maintained and this will have an impact on where events can be held. We would advise that spectators are discouraged at first, with the exception to this being for U16 competitors who MUST have a responsible person with them, and 17/18 year olds who SHOULD have a responsible person with them (with a responsible person being a parent or designated guardian over the age of 18)
- Prior registration (online) is required and organising committees must collect contact information from each participant to assist with contact tracing
- All participants to complete Self-Report Screening before EACH swim

Phase 4 - Events

- Events can resume; mass gatherings of up to 500 people permitted once a move into Phase 4 is confirmed
- Limitations to be placed on the number of spectators and where social distancing can be maintained and this will have an impact on where events can be held
- Prior registration (online) is required and organising committees must collect contact information from each participant to assist with contact tracing
- All participants to complete Self-Report Screening before EACH swim

Prior to Each Event

- All COVID-19 provisions in place should be communicated to all participants, spectators, and Event Personnel (Officials/Volunteers/Safety Personnel) in advance of the event taking place
- COVID-19 health advisories should be displayed at the event; also consider markings on the ground
- Event Personnel should not take part in an event if any cold or flu symptoms are being experienced. If a COVID-19 test is not available to them at this time, this individual should self-isolate for 14 days
- Event Personnel and spectators should adhere to the current government guidance on social distancing in open spaces
- For car parking, it is recommended to park in opposite directions, ie, first car drives forward into a space, next car reverses into a space and so on, so that changing areas (normally the boot of the car) are spread out in line with social distancing requirements
- No hand shaking or similar contact greetings to occur
- Swimmers/Event Personnel should adopt good respiratory hygiene, covering their nose and mouth when they cough or sneeze
- It is recommended that Event Personnel use face coverings and wear rubber/disposable gloves and these should be provided by the Organising Committee
- It is recommended that swimmers use face coverings and wear rubber/disposable gloves at registration and these should be provided by the swimmers themselves
- Hand sanitiser should be accessible in all common areas

Guidance for Participants

- Swimmers should not take part in an event if any cold or flu symptoms are being experienced. If a COVID-19 test is not available to them at this time, this individual should self-isolate for 14 days
- Swimmers should adhere to the government guidance on social distancing in open spaces (currently 2m but check latest guidance)
- No swimmer-swimmer body contact and swimmers to practice current required social distancing measures from each other in when in the water
- Swimmers not to share drinks or foodstuffs prior to, during or after event. Drinks bottles to be clearly marked for ownership and single use drinks bottle (marked with ownership) are preferable
- Swimmers to only use their own equipment
- Swimmers not to loan personal equipment or caps/goggles to each other

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- Swimmers should adopt good respiratory hygiene, covering their nose and mouth when they cough or sneeze

Guidance for Event Organisers

- Event Personnel should be kept to a minimum while ensuring the event can run safely and smoothly
- Event Personnel should be educated on social distancing protocols and other requirements
- Registration should be online in advance of the event with race day check in only
- Restrict the number of people at the check in area, social distancing in relation to available venue area space must be considered when determining the numbers
- For any case where persons are not following the established prevention procedures in relation to COVID-19, they will be asked to leave the event
- Ensure Registration Staff and Volunteers have Personal Protective Equipment available to wear
- If in use, timing chips and velcros must be disinfected according to the recommendation from the manufacturers.
- If in use, ensure that the timing provider has safety measures in place to ensure social distancing during issue of timing equipment
- Athletes should provide their own masks/mouth-nose face covering, disinfectant wipes and rubber/disposable gloves as deemed appropriate
- Staggered check in times should be used to ensure social distancing can be maintained at check in. Consider spacing marked on the ground for queuing

Guidance for Safety Crews

- Wear gloves and face shields/masks/helmets with visors down (boat crews)
- Use equipment such as torpedo buoy if possible
- Have stock of masks on the boat for swimmers to wear
- Follow PHECC advice in relation to first aid and CPR if required

Bag Drop Off/Collection

We recommend that there is no bag drop area (or transportation of bags for a point to point race) in the first instance.

- Provision should be made for a competitor changing area, where bags can remain for the duration of the swim
- Event organisers should have stewards patrolling the competitor changing area at all times

The Race

- All race information should be provided to swimmers online prior to the event date along with all guidelines concerning event policies and procedures, assigned check in and race times, increased hygiene measures etc.
- Safety briefings should be recorded and made available online prior to the event
- It is recommended that all events implement a rolling start system in specific start waves with the provision of a waiting area for the athletes respecting social distancing. The queue to swim start should be a single channel similar to an airport check in
- Swimmers are not permitted to line up outside their allocated race time
- The finish should be sufficiently wide enough to allow for social distancing and should open into a wide area where swimmers can recover
- Prize giving should be completed electronically/by post with no ceremonies taking place

Note

This is a guidance document only. It is for the benefit of members as information. It is not legal advice or intended as a substitute for any applicable government advice. It is also not a substitute for clubs/members/users carrying out their own full risk assessment and review. Swim Ireland does not give a warranty or undertaking as to the advice in this document

This document will be updated following revised government advice as we move into the next phase/step of the roadmap

July 2020