

## USA Swimming Deck Changing Rule

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Chair, USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee

At the 2014 USA Swimming House of Delegates meeting, the House passed R-9 which changed the sanctioning requirement for meets:

202.2 REQUIREMENTS FOR SANCTION — Sanctions are issued, withheld or withdrawn in accordance with the following regulations:

.1-.8 [no changes]

.9 Application for sanction must be accompanied by a copy of the complete meet announcement which must include the following:

A-H [no changes]

I. The following statement: “Changing into or out of swimsuits other than in locker rooms or other designated areas is prohibited.”

The Rules and Regulations Committee, working in conjunction with the Safe Sport Committee, Athletes’ Executive Committee and Officials’ Committee agreed on the following definition of “Deck Changing”:

***Deck Change - Changing, in whole or in part, into or out of a swimsuit (excluding a drag suit) in an area other than a permanent or temporary locker room, bathroom, changing room or other space designated for changing purposes while at a practice, competition, or other pool-related activity.***

It is important to note that although the House changed the wording in article 202.2.9.I to “prohibit” deck changing, it had the opportunity to but did not specify a penalty for a swimmer performing a deck change. We are put in a position where LSCs and officials are left with no direction regarding what, if any, penalty should be levied against an athlete observed deck changing. The risk here is that there will be varying degrees of enforcement of 202.2.9.I. In the first three months of this year we have seen exactly that.

It is the consensus of the Rules and Regulations, Safe Sport, Athletes’ Executive and Officials’ Committees that the preferred approach to dealing with deck changing is to view the change in 202.2.9.I as the House’s desire for a paradigm shift regarding deck changing: what was once considered acceptable is now unacceptable in the sport. Our focus should be on educating our members that deck changing is not acceptable and can put our athletes at risk. The consensus of these committees is that LSCs should be encouraged not to adopt a punitive approach to enforcing this provision of our rules but rather work collaboratively with coaches to stop instances of deck changing across the sport.

The following is provided for LSCs consideration:

1. Officials’ eyes should be on the pool – not looking for swimmers who might be deck changing.
2. Should deck changing be observed, officials should not attempt to intervene to stop it, but rather note the gender and team of the swimmer as well as the location of the deck change. Report this information to the Referee when time permits. The Referee should work with the Meet Director and/or facility staff to communicate with the coach of the swimmer(s) that were deck changing. This communication should provide the information and ask for the coach’s cooperation to get the swimmers to change in the designated areas in the facility.
3. Meet Directors and Referees should ensure that the Meet Marshals and host facility staff are aware that swimmers should only be changing in designated changing facilities. Meet Marshals and facility staff should not intervene directly with swimmers that are deck changing; rather, they should note the gender and team of the swimmer as well as the location of the deck change and deal directly with the coach in question.
4. If the coach of the swimmer(s) is uncooperative regarding requests to comply with getting swimmers to change in the designated changing areas, report details of the instance to the LSC Safe Sport Chair and General Chair for follow-up.

Hopefully this guidance provides LSCs, coaches, officials, athletes and their families a starting point for a discussion on how we can effect increased athlete safety and security by eliminating deck changing in our sport.