

## **Special Instructions to Kayakers and Swimmers**

Thank you very much for participating in the 2024 Tampa Bay Frogman Swim. As the safety director I want to pass on a few key points before the event on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2024.

This swim is a physical challenge that can only be accomplished through coordinated team work and a spirit of shared responsibility for the protection of all participants. It is and is always the intent of the Tampa Bay Frogman Swim to pay homage to the best of the best that paid the ultimate sacrifice by matching their professionalism and tactical acumen with like professionalism and tactical acumen.

To that point I would like to impart two principles that are critical for our success this year. First and foremost; this is a team event. The team consists of one safety kayaker and one swimmer operating as a cohesive unit. From initial linkup to the recovery of all participants and equipment, we ask that each team think and function in a manner that honors those we represent when we kayak and swim. A cohesive team operates, navigates and communicates effectively in all conditions. To be effective requires a degree of rigor and discipline. The entirety of the race staff requests that you take some time to work out your individual team plans. Crossing Tampa Bay in January is a significant challenge for beginners and experts alike. Please respect the dynamics of the operating area and the course and plan accordingly.

Second, accountability is non-negotiable and we ask your support in ensuring we always know how many swimmers are in the water and how many kayakers are on the water at any given time. Please read the start procedures in this note and at the safety brief prior to the start, we ask that you pay close attention to the accountability procedures. Each swimmer will be chipped out and manually counted out. Each kayaker will be manually counted out. At the finish, each swimmer will be chipped in and manually counted in. Each kayaker will be manually counted in. We ask that each swimmer and each kayaker commit to ensuring their team's accountability and follow the procedures during the event.

### **Safety Plan**

The Safety Plan is built upon three principles; PREVENTION, INTERVENTION and CRISIS RESPONSE.

Prevention is defined as all actions taken by the organizers, staff and participants to ensure a safe and efficient crossing of Tampa Bay.

Intervention is defined as all actions taken by the organizers, staff and participants to stop/cease all activities that jeopardizes an individual's safety, life, limb or eye.

Crisis Response is defined as an action or group of actions taken by the staff to respond to any event beyond the ability of participants to remediate that arises that jeopardizes an individual's safety, life, limb or eye.

Each team has a substantial responsibility in prevention and intervention. The following is a list of responsibilities each team needs to be cognizant of in order to conduct a safe crossing.

**Prevention:** There are two subjective hazards on the course that historically cause teams the most problems; the first is hypothermia and the second is exhaustion.

**Hypothermia: For all swimmers this year wetsuits are mandatory.** It is recommended that any configuration of wetsuit have the trunk portion be a 3-4 MM thickness. The January average water temperature for Tampa Bay is 62 degrees. All swimmers should note that this is an average and on a typical event day the water temperature can go below the reported water temperature by as much as 7 degrees due to winds, upwelling and currents. For planning purposes, be prepared to be in water as low as 56-58 degrees for 3 hours.

Any configuration of wetsuit is acceptable; shorty, farmer john, and full. Your torso must have appropriate coverage.

Prior to the day of the event, the team should spend some time to ensure they understand the dynamics and symptoms of hypothermia. Please familiarize yourself with the three stages of hypothermia and be cognizant of the symptoms and behaviors. At a minimum, understand the effects of:

1. Cold Shock
2. Incapacitation
3. Hypothermia

In addition to wetsuits, it is highly recommended that each swimmer fuel adequately, have the ability to re-fuel during the swim. **This year it is mandatory for each swimmer to have warm/hot liquids in their safety kayak.** There will be a hot liquids fill station on the beach in the vicinity of kayaker registration. Also, it is critical for the swimmer and kayaker to identify symptoms and behaviors, remediate the problem before the swimmer's physical condition deteriorates even more. Pay particular attention to the early stages of incapacitation where weakness, cramping and loss of limb use begins. Please identify the problem early and start the process and procedures for removal from the course. By removing yourself or teammate from the course before the situation is life threatening relieves the burden on the waterborne casualty evacuation assets and the shoreside medical assets.

After successfully crossing Tampa Bay as a cohesive team, please be aware that the swimmer is still susceptible to hypothermia. After drop is a condition caused during initial warming when peripheral vasoconstriction (cold water trapped in your limbs to prevent your core from chilling) ends and the cold blood from your limbs mixes with your core causing your core temperature to drop rapidly.

**Exhaustion:** In cold water, exhaustion can lead to hypothermia and the beginning stages of hypothermia exhaustion is a critical component of the incapacitation phase. This guidance is for the swimmer that is tired and having a hard time completing the course and **DOES NOT EXHIBIT ANY SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHERMIA.**

It is perfectly acceptable at any time for a swimmer to rest by holding on to their safety craft. Additionally, it is perfectly acceptable to be towed by your safety craft or if required, re-spotting or being towed by a lifeguard manned jet ski. The goal is to have each team effectively cross Tampa Bay in a safe manner. Please do not jeopardize your physical condition by gutting it out if you are feeling exhausted. As soon as you go deeper into exhaustion you just opened the door to a rapid descent into stage 3 hypothermia. If it is not your day, it is better to call it early.

**Intervention:** Any contingency on the water will progress as follows:

1. SELF AID – The swimmer clearly identifies his problem or apprises his safety kayaker of his situation if able.
2. BUDDY AID – The safety kayaker executes the following:
  - a. Secure the swimmer - Ensure the swimmer is in a position of positive buoyance or can securely hold on to the vessel.
  - b. Evaluate the swimmer – If the swimmer requires assistance beyond what the team can provide immediately move to the next step while ensuring positive control of the swimmer.
  - c. Signal – The kayaker can visually signal by placing their paddle vertically, can audibly signal by using a whistle and blowing four blasts in quick succession every minute or both until a lifeguard or another team responds. If another team responds, the kayaker and swimmer are to hold 10 meters off the position of the team requesting assistance and immediately pick up signaling. This allows the kayaker requesting assistance to focus on their swimmer and continue evaluating.
  - d. Transition – Once the lifeguard team arrives, the safety kayaker follows their directions and communicates the situation to the lifeguard. If the lifeguard makes the assessment for evacuation he will clearly state “My Swimmer”. At this point, the kayaker follows the lifeguard’s directions.
  - e. Return – The kayaker will be escorted to the nearest team, attached to that team and directed to follow in trace to the finish. That team is now a three man team and the kayaker will check in at the finish under their original number and annotate that their swimmer was evacuated.

\*\* If the kayaker requires assistance or evacuation for any reason the same procedures are in effect. It is requested that the nearest team assist in signaling for a life guard and standby until the lifeguard has control of the kayaker. If the swimmer is able to proceed, they will be attached to another team.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL AID – Once the lifeguard takes control of the swimmer, he will select the best means available to provide initial care and transport the swimmer to the appropriate location for follow on care.

**Crisis Response:** The Tampa Bay Frogman Swim staff have invested considerably in the crisis response infrastructure and assets for this event. We have joined to our team Tampa Bay’s best first responders, doctors, lifeguards and law enforcement personnel to safely conduct this event.

On 13 January at 12 PM on Gandy Beach by the American Flag and the NSW Flag, the Safety Director and Head Lifeguard will be available to answer any of your questions or address any of your concerns. At 1230 at the same location, they will be conducting a 20 minute class on hypothermia and prevention of hypothermia in cold water swims.

## Start/Finish Procedures

Accountability for this event is critical and we ask that each participant (kayaker and swimmer) assist us in maintaining accountability of all individuals on the water and in the water.

### Swimmers:

1. When your wave is called to enter the water, make sure you enter the water under the start arch. There will be a timing mat you will need to cross and an individual with a safety vest marked "Swimmer" that will manually count out the wave. Please go single file and wait for his tap on your shoulder to proceed. Once tapped on the shoulder proceed out to the water and spread out in line approximately 2-3 feet apart.
2. Turn towards the West and wait for your kayaker to link up with you. There will be enough time allocated to ensure your kayaker is able to link up with you.
3. If your kayaker is not linked up with you at the 1 minute warning, raise your hand. All due effort will be made to get the link up completed before the start.
4. If the link up can not be made and the gun goes off, the **SWIMMER WILL HOLD ON THE START**. Once your kayaker makes the link up you can proceed on course. Make note of the amount of time you held on the start line and your time will be manually adjusted. The start official will also make note and ensure your time is adjusted.
5. Towards the finish of the race close to the American Legion in shallow water, you will split from your kayaker and proceed towards the finish arch. Once you cross the timing mat the same individual at the start with the vest marked "Swimmer" will manually count you in. He will tap you on the shoulder. Additionally, an individual will remove your timing chip for you.
6. If you do not require any assistance proceed through the chute and there will be a designated area where you can link up with your kayaker.

### Kayakers

1. When your wave is called, the kayaks will be on the beach 4-8 kayaks abreast. As you enter the water, there will be an individual with a safety vest marked "Kayaker" that will manually count you out. The kayak staging area is tight and congested so please make verbal contact and wait for acknowledgement from the counter so he can get an accurate count.
2. Proceed towards the start line and visually ID your swimmer. Ideally, position your craft 5 to 10 feet behind them.
3. If you can not make the link up before the gun goes off the **KAYAKER WILL HOLD ON THE START**. Once you make the link up you can proceed with your swimmer.
4. Towards the finish of the race close to the American Legion in shallow water, you will split from your swimmer and proceed towards the boat ramp. At the boat ramp there will be individuals that will assist you in landing your kayak and removing it to the staging area.
5. Once your kayak is secure, proceed to the designated area for kayaker swimmer link up.
6. If you intend to return to Gandy Beach or proceed to another take out location, please check in with the counter in the safety vest marked "Kayaker" and ensure he has you counted.

Thank you again for your participation in this challenging event and supporting an amazing organization that supports so many.