



Cumbria Amateur Swimming Association Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment for Cumbria Open Water League

Risk Assessment for Cumbria Open Water League (In association with Epic Event Management Ltd.)

The event organisers, Epic Event Management Ltd, have outright responsibility for safety at their events. This risk assessment is for Cumbria Open Water League competitors and is produced to **supplement the organiser's (Epic Event Management Ltd) race guidance notes**. The guidance notes and event safety advice can be found on the organiser's website www.epicevents.co.uk under the event specific link.

Undertaken by Lindsey Bradley (Cumbria ASA Open Water Secretary) **Review Date:** March 2026
Helen Smith-Ward (Swim England Open Water Coach / Cumbria ASA Volunteer Coordinator)

Subject Area	Identified Hazard	Persons at Risk	Risk Significance			Action required	Residual Risk
			Low	Med	High		
Risk to Swimmers	Ability/Inexperience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitors should be confident in open water swimming techniques before entering any event Competitors (and their parents / guardians) should only enter distances they are confident of completing. Attendance at pre-race brief for swimmers is essential to understand procedures in the event of an emergency or swimmer in difficulty situation – Generally this is to float on back with arm raised continuously – safety crews will be briefed by race organisers to recognise distress signal. 	Low
	Emergency Situation affecting whole race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 	X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the event of an emergency affecting the whole race the rescue boat will patrol the course and repeatedly complete 3 blasts on an airhorn. In this situation; swim directly to the nearest shoreline to safety and a competitor retrieval plan will be put into operation. Competitors are expected to familiarise themselves with the nearest shoreline around the course. Course maps and layouts can be found on Epic Event website – epicevents.co.uk (follow links to each race) 	Low

	Trauma/Injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at pre-race briefing for swimmers is essential to understand procedures in the event of an emergency or swimmer in difficulty situation – Generally this is to float on back with arm raised continuously – safety crews will be briefed by race organisers to recognise distress signal 	Med
Water Temperature	Cold Water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold shock Hypothermia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Epic Events offer non-wetsuit (Skins) options in their events to competitors however COWL entry is mandatory wetsuit (unless stated otherwise) Swimmers to ensure they wear correct fitting wetsuit so it will perform as designed – to provide thermal protection to the swimmers. Medical services and safety stewards will be on site in case of an emergency 	Low
	Warm Water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hyperthermia (Overheating) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitors to ensure they stay hydrated before and after the race. Organisers are likely to provide water in the competitors' area, but swimmers should ensure they have their own drinks in case of a shortage (no different to a pool competition) Medical services and safety stewards will be on site in case of an emergency 	Low
Water conditions – waves / currents	Compromised safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to affect a safe rescue in an emergency Drowning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event organisers will determine if water conditions are safe to start the race and advise accordingly. Pre-race brief will advise competitors on the procedure for exiting the water in the event that conditions change during the race – this will include the signal from safety stewards and the exit points Pre-race briefing will advise competitors on the procedures in the event of an emergency or swimmer in difficulty situation – Generally this is to float on back with arm raised continuously – safety crews will be briefed by race organisers to recognise distress signal. 	Low
Underwater Features	Rocks, shallows, weed beds. Entrapment, impact hazard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at pre-race briefing for swimmers and reading each event guidance notes is essential to understand the course, any areas of significance i.e. shallows, under surface obstructions and areas to avoid. Safety boats will ensure swimmers stay on course. Although race timing systems are generally on shore – care should be taken when exiting the water in race conditions. 	Low

Site	Access / Egress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slips, trips, falls, Abrasions and cuts, Impact with bottom/ underwater hazards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisers will post site layout diagram (including access and egress points and course route) on their website, usually in the event guidance notes. Competitors and accompanying adult to familiarise themselves with the site layout for each event undertaken. Attendance at pre-race brief is essential to understand any changes to published details. Follow all instructions given by race organiser and safety stewards. Only use designated access / egress points Coniston, Ullswater and Windermere are shore entry / exit points. Suitable footwear to be worn in competitors' area prior to race line up. 	Low
	Spectator access: safe viewing, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trips, slips, falls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spectators 		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spectators to use designated spectator areas All children to be supervised near water's edge. Spectators must not enter competitors' area without authorisation of safety steward. Follow all instructions given by race organiser and safety stewards 	Low
	Safety Team: Emergency access. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recovery of casualty and hand over to emergency services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers Spectators 			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at pre-race brief for swimmers is essential to understand procedures in the event of an emergency or swimmer in difficulty situation – Generally this is to float on back with arm raised continuously – safety crews will be briefed by race organisers to recognise distress signal. Spectators to use designated spectator areas and not impede safety crew or emergency services. Follow all instructions given by race organiser and safety stewards 	Low
	Protection from elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold and Heat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers Spectators 			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers and spectators to wear appropriate clothing for the day's weather. Swimmers to use designated changing areas, particularly in bad or cold weather. Check weather reports for local area prior to travelling to the event 	Low

Water Quality	Blue Green Algae and other waterborne species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers 			x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Environment Agency and Cumbria River trust proactively monitor Lake District water for waterborne species. The event organisers (based on advice from EA) will determine if the water quality meets required standards and advise accordingly. Dependant on the time of year, weather conditions in the run up to the event will be a factor in the water quality. It is not unusual for the National Trust to close lakes and rivers to the public due to an algae bloom. 	Low
	Cross contamination of waterborne species – plant and animal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment 			x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of a scheme to help prevent the spread of foreign invaders into UK freshwater Epic Events will be asking all swimmers to follow a simple ‘Ditch the Hitchhikers’ procedure. All competitors are asked to ensure that your wetsuit, goggles, hats etc. are clean and dry before attending the event. Following your swim, please clean them in the bins provided and ensure that there are no foreign objects attached to your suit - please see the “Stop the Spread” poster in the appendices of each swim’s guidance notes. All swimmers MUST clean and dry their wetsuits prior to entering another watercourse 	Low
Wildlife – (Birds etc)	Interactions with wildlife – defensive / aggressive behaviour leading to cuts, abrasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimmers Spectators 	x			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All competitors and spectators to avoid interaction with wildlife particularly on & around the shoreline All swimmers advised not to swim towards birds on the water. Swimmers are advised that some birds may fly low over or towards them. Swimmers to remain calm and carry on swimming. If distressed, then initiate the swimmer in distress protocol; generally, this is to float on back with arm raised continuously – safety crews will be briefed by race organisers to recognise distress signal. 	Low