

# MRA Safety Guidelines for Road Running Events

The intent of the following is to heighten awareness of the importance of safety when planning and staging a road running event in Manitoba. This is a guide and we encourage you to contact local medical service providers for details as to safety requirements relating to your event. When doing this, be sure to provide all details, time, date and location of your event, number of participants, and other details as required, some locations may require an ambulance on standby, etc. Do your homework and be prepared.

**Medical Assistance:** Available on-site medical assistance is a mandatory requirement regardless of the race size or distance:

- **Space for Medical Team and Ambulance.** Provide a convenient area for the medical team to set-up at the finish. If you have a large race, 500+ participants you should advise the local ambulance service of your event. Plan ahead so that if an ambulance has to enter the race area it will be able to do so quickly and efficiently.
- **Quantity and Quality of Medical Team.** Make sure that medical personnel are appropriate for your event. Contact local community medical providers such as St. John's Ambulance, 204- 784-7000, Canadian First Aid Training, 204-955-9241, etc. Make sure that you provide a sufficient amount of medical personnel to attend to the needs of the participants. This determination will be based upon the number of race participants, anticipated weather conditions, type of course and training of the medical team. When determining the proper quantity of medical personnel, consider the scenario where two emergency situations arise and one medical team is dealing with one emergency. Who is available to deal with the second.
- **Communication with the Medical Team.** Remind the medical team prior to race day of the time at which they need to set-up. Include them in the communication network you have set-up and make sure that they have been informed as to the proper operation of the communication equipment you are using. Consider in your plans how accessible each part of the race course will be for the medical team in case of an emergency and make sure to go over this plan with the medical team in advance so they will know what to do should a medical emergency arise. Have a vehicle on hand identified for medical needs, to transport a medical person on the course, or to pick up a participant that is not able to finish the race safely.
- **Supplies.** Review with the medical team those supplies they will provide and what they will need that you will provide. Always arrange to have ice available to the medical team prior to the start of the race.
- **Identification.** Make sure that the medical team and medical tent are marked in an obvious way. Inform all volunteers as to the location of the medical teams and how best to communicate with them if they are needed.
- **Medical Emergency.** Make sure that the volunteers are also instructed as to what actions they are to take in the event of a medical emergency. Such common sense matters as not moving a person who has sustained head, neck or back injury need to be reviewed at the volunteer meetings in advance of the race date, steps to take in case of an accident or incident that may involve personal injury should be included in your volunteer instruction information package.

Note: Your medical team coordinator needs to be aware of the Privacy and Confidentiality of medical information. Volunteers should not speak to the media or answer inquiries about a participant's condition or treatment. A specific person should be designated as the spokesperson.

**Weather:** One of the most crucial factors involving any road race event is also the least predictable, the weather. The following is a list of considerations involving weather:

- Plan Ahead. As the race date gets nearer, the weather conditions will become more predictable. If it is going to be extremely hot, additional water stations and ice should be considered. The location of the finish line medical team should be moved as close to the finish line as possible. As a rule of thumb, plan with the thought in mind that the conditions will be more extreme than predicted.
- Medical Team. If extreme weather is predicted make sure to contact the medical team so that they are able to prepare in advance for any additional material or personnel they will need.
- Lightning. An electrical storm within the race course area within 1 hour of the start time should be considered potentially life threatening to runners. A determination should be made at the time as to whether the race should be continued as scheduled, delayed until the storm has passed or canceled altogether. **(no race is to be run if there is lightning)**
- Dehydration and Heat Exhaustion. In extreme heat conditions, the possibility of dehydration and heat exhaustion are increased dramatically. Adjustments can be made in advance of the race date by making sure that the runners are warned to maintain their hydration before, during and after the event, and also by making sure that water is provided at the start of the race. Under extreme conditions, the distance and time of the event must be considered. If the combination of the length of exposure of runners to extreme conditions presents a life threatening situation, cancellation of the event must be considered. Consult with your medical director or other health officials.
- Shelter. In both hot and cold extreme conditions, shelter from the elements for the runners becomes important. Obviously shelter is something that must be arranged well in advance and therefore must be considered as part of your initial planning. If it is pouring or freezing at the start of an event, runners will want to seek shelter. It's the same at the end of the race. Runners will want shelter while waiting for the awards ceremony.

### **Route/Course and Finish**

- Course Conditions. If the general condition of the course has become extremely hazardous due to the weather, then a decision to delay or cancel the event must be made. Common sense should prevail. Consult with local authorities in making your decision.
- Traffic Control. Traffic in the finish line area and on the route is always a safety concern, and the flow of traffic must be taken into consideration when planning your event, make sure that you have a sufficient number of well informed marshals wearing MRA safety vests to keep participants safe.
- Finish Line. Make sure there are race personnel stationed in position to direct runners into the finish line area. The finish line should be clearly marked and visible from a distance.

- Anticipate Mid-Pack Surge. The work of the finish line volunteers will intensify and be tested as the middle of the pack comes in. The volunteers should be warned of this from the beginning so that they are not caught unaware and can avoid a pile-up at the finish.
- Persons Present In Finish Line Area. Make sure that only those persons essential to the finish line operations and associated with the finish line medical team are in the finish line area. All others should be kept back behind barricades or flags.
- Water. Have water readily available for all finishers in close proximity to the finish line.
- Runners in Distress. Have the finish line workers instructed in the necessary procedures to contact the medical team in the event that a finishing runner is in distress.
- Equipment. Make sure that the volunteer in charge of the finish line equipment has sufficiently secured the equipment (especially timing clocks) to prevent it from being blown down in high wind. Make sure that finish and start structures are placed high enough to allow trucks to pass underneath without hitting them (if required)
- Special Considerations for Children. Children running in events is gaining greater popularity and encouraged by the MRA to help promote running fitness. This can also help increase sponsorships, and greater community acceptance of your event. If you are planning on having a separate run for the children to coincide with your run, we would suggest it be: un-timed, non-competitive, medals/ribbons should be given to all participants. Consider having all runners wear bibs #1. (distances up to a max. of 3 - 5k. and shorter depending on the age groups)
- *Do a thorough job of cleaning the start-finish area and repairing and restoring the route/trails used in an event. Pick up all course markings and equipment immediately after your event.*

## **CONCLUSION**

- ⌘ The safety of the participants and spectators involved in a road racing event should be foremost on the minds of all persons planning and putting on an event. These guidelines should be used as an aid in making road racing events safer. These guidelines are continually evolving and being updated by the MRA. Therefore, if you have suggestions, additions or corrections to the guidelines please submit them to the MRA.

### **Note:**

- ⌘ *Persons using these guidelines do so with the express understanding that the guidelines are the result of the contributions of individuals and as to the whole or as to any particular part thereof the guidelines are not necessarily the option or representation of the persons listed hereafter. The MRA (Manitoba Runners' Association). These guidelines are provided as a guide for our Race Directors.*