



SANCTIONED ACTIVITY POLICY

Sanctioned Activity Safety Policy

Baseline safety, risk-management, emergency, venue, equipment, and activity-specific requirements for OCA-sanctioned events

Competition can involve risk. Preventable chaos is not a competition format.

OCA sanctions activities across a deliberately broad range of physical, creative, technical, culinary, outdoor, performance, and community settings. This policy establishes the baseline safety framework that organizers must use to identify foreseeable hazards, scale controls to the activity, and respond when conditions become unsafe.

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GAME FOR ANYTHING. NOT HARM.

1. Purpose and Scope

The Open Competition Alliance requires sanctioned activities to be planned and operated with reasonable safety controls proportionate to the actual risks of the activity, venue, participants, equipment, environment, and event format.

This policy applies to sanctioned competition and event-connected operational activity. It is intended as a universal baseline. It does not attempt to replace discipline-specific technical safety rules, professional standards, venue requirements, insurance conditions, permits, licenses, athletic commissions, food-safety codes, fire codes, medical protocols, or other legal or specialized requirements.

THE SAFETY STANDARD

OCA is extraordinarily open about what people can compete at. It is not casual about preventable serious harm.

2. Organizer Responsibility

The event organizer remains responsible for implementing event safety. OCA sanctioning does not transfer operational control or duty from the organizer to OCA.

The organizer must identify who has authority to make safety decisions, stop or pause activity, contact emergency services, coordinate with the venue, and document significant incidents. Safety responsibilities should be assigned before doors open rather than improvised during an emergency.

3. Proportionate Risk Management

Different competitions present different hazards. A public spelling bee, a cooking contest, a welding challenge, a climbing event, and a martial arts competition should not be managed as though they create the same risk.

Organizers should identify foreseeable hazards, evaluate the likelihood and seriousness of harm, apply reasonable controls, and determine whether the remaining risk is appropriate for informed participation.

- Nature of the activity and physical demands.
- Age, experience, accessibility, and participant population.
- Tools, machinery, heat, electricity, structures, vehicles, animals, water, heights, weapons, food, chemicals, or other specialty hazards.
- Venue design, exits, crowding, surfaces, lighting, sound, power, internet dependence, and responder access.
- Weather, travel, duration, fatigue, and overnight conditions.
- Availability of qualified officials, technical personnel, safety staff, and emergency resources.

4. Inherent Risk vs. Unreasonable Risk

Competition can involve physical exertion, contact, speed, height, tools, performance stress, weather exposure, or other understood hazards. The fact that an activity contains risk does not make it unsanctionable.

OCA will not treat as acceptable an event structure that creates unreasonable or unmanaged danger, hides material hazards, removes meaningful ability to withdraw, or uses preventable serious harm as spectacle.

COMPETITION INVOLVES RISK. HARM IS NOT THE POINT.

The question is whether the risk is proportionate, understood, responsibly managed, and compatible with fair and informed participation.

5. Venue and Site Safety

Organizers must evaluate whether the venue can safely support the proposed event, not merely whether the room is available. A venue walkthrough should follow the competitor, official, spectator, safeguarding, emergency, and equipment pathways.

- Capacity, entrances, exits, emergency egress, responder access, and evacuation requirements.
- Competition surface, structural limitations, ceiling height, barriers, staging, loading, and crowd flow.
- Lighting, sound, power, cables, extension cords, trip hazards, and safe equipment placement.
- Restrooms, changing areas, private spaces, accessibility routes, seating, and participant support needs.
- Fire, severe-weather, building, and venue emergency procedures.
- Outdoor terrain, heat, cold, lightning, wind, air quality, water conditions, or other environmental hazards.

6. Equipment, Tools, Materials, and Technical Systems

Equipment must be appropriate to the activity, reasonably maintained, used within its intended or safely approved function, and operated by people with suitable competence where the risk warrants it.

Events should define prohibited materials or unsafe modifications, inspection responsibilities where applicable, safe storage, shutdown procedures, and what happens when organizer-provided equipment fails.

- Use rated cables, power distribution, barriers, protective equipment, and technical hardware appropriate to the environment.
- Keep critical systems charged or backed up where practical.
- Do not permit jury-rigged technical solutions when failure could create serious injury or fire risk.
- If a scoring or public-display technology fails, prioritize safe continuation or a controlled pause rather than chaotic improvisation.

7. Physical and Athletic Competition

Physical competition must use rules, surfaces, equipment, supervision, officiating, and emergency planning appropriate to the discipline. Contact, collision, endurance, strength, acrobatics, speed, climbing, sparring, grappling, or other demanding activity may be sanctionable when responsibly structured.

OCA sanctioning does not create discipline expertise. Activities that customarily require specialized referees, coaches, spotters, medical coverage, athletic commissions, protective equipment, qualification standards, or other technical safeguards must use those protections where applicable.

8. Combat, Weapons, and High-Risk Demonstration Activity

Martial arts, combat-adjacent, weapons-form, breaking, stage-combat, or similar activities require heightened discipline-specific review. Lawful equipment, qualified officials, controlled contact rules, protective systems, safe distances, material standards, and medical or emergency provisions must be appropriate to the proposed format.

No OCA approval should be interpreted as authorization to ignore jurisdictional weapons law, athletic commission requirements, professional rules, or venue restrictions.

9. Maker, Trade, Engineering, and Workshop Activities

Competitions involving welding, metalwork, blacksmithing, power tools, electrical systems, structural testing, fabrication, robotics, chemicals, heat, pressure, or machinery must be supervised and designed according to the hazards involved.

Organizers should control access to work areas, define personal protective equipment, manage sparks, fumes, hot surfaces, pinch points, stored energy, electrical hazards, moving machinery, spectators, and safe testing zones as appropriate.

10. Culinary, Food, Beverage, and Sensory Activities

Food and beverage competitions must account for applicable food-safety, sanitation, allergen, temperature-control, knife, heat, equipment, and service requirements. OCA sanctioning does not replace food-handler rules, health-department requirements, licenses, or venue policies.

Blind tasting, scent identification, or other sensory events should use controlled, non-hazardous materials and should disclose or manage relevant allergens or exposure risks where appropriate.

11. Outdoor, Environmental, Water, and Weather Risk

Outdoor events must identify weather and site conditions that require delay, modification, relocation, evacuation, or cancellation. Authority to make those decisions must be clear before the event.

Relevant plans may address heat, cold, lightning, wind, air quality, flooding, water conditions, terrain, visibility, wildlife, route access, communications, participant check-in/check-out, and emergency retrieval. Schedule inconvenience is not a reason to continue through unsafe conditions.

12. Animals

Where animals are involved, the competition must prioritize humane treatment, appropriate care, lawful welfare standards, safe handling, and participant/public safety. Cruelty, deliberate distress, or exploitative treatment of animals cannot be part of the competitive challenge.

Specialized veterinary, agricultural, licensing, or welfare requirements remain the responsibility of the organizer and relevant professionals or authorities.

13. Accessibility and Participant-Specific Safety

Accessibility is part of safe operations. Events should consider routes, seating, restrooms, communication, interpreters, support persons, service animals, sensory needs, timing, mobility, personal care, and reasonable process adjustments.

Organizers should ask participants what access they need rather than guessing. An accommodation should be incorporated safely and transparently without treating disability as an automatic reason to exclude a participant.

14. Minors, Vulnerable Adults, and Safeguarding

Safety and safeguarding overlap but are not identical. Events involving minors or vulnerable adults must also comply with the OCA Competition Integrity and Safeguarding Policy and any other safeguarding requirements.

A medical, venue, or physical-safety plan does not replace boundaries, supervision, reporting routes, privacy controls, or other safeguarding measures. Likewise, safeguarding training does not replace technical safety competence.

15. Alcohol, Drugs, and Impairment

People serving in official, safety-sensitive, safeguarding, technical, or competition-administration roles must not perform those duties while impaired. Events may impose stricter substance rules based on age, venue, activity, equipment, travel, or risk.

Dangerous intoxication, illegal drug activity, or substance-related conduct that threatens safety, judgment, or event operations may require removal from a role or activity.

16. Emergency and Medical Planning

Every event should know how emergency response will work before an emergency occurs. The level of planning should scale to the event's actual risk.

- Who has authority to stop the competition.
- How to contact emergency services and venue security.
- Where first-aid resources, AEDs, medical personnel, or emergency equipment are located where applicable.
- How responders will reach the competition area.
- How participants and spectators will be moved, sheltered, or evacuated.
- How emergency contact and incident information will be documented and protected.
- How the event decides whether and when competition may safely resume.

MEDICAL PRIORITY

Do not allow competitive pressure, schedule pressure, awards, or scoring concerns to delay obvious medical care.

17. Stop, Hold, Modify, or Cancel Authority

The event must identify who may pause, stop, modify, relocate, or cancel activity for safety. Officials and technical personnel should be empowered to raise hazards within their expertise without fear of retaliation.

A safety hold should last long enough to determine whether the hazard can be corrected. If safe conditions cannot be restored, the organizer must modify or end the affected activity even when that decision is inconvenient or financially costly.

18. Incident Response and Documentation

When a significant safety incident occurs, the event should protect immediate safety, preserve relevant records, document factual information, notify appropriate internal personnel, and make any required external report.

Documentation should distinguish direct observations, participant statements, actions taken, and later conclusions. Serious incidents may also require OCA notification under sanctioning or reporting requirements.

19. Material Changes After Sanction

OCA must be notified of material changes that alter the safety basis on which an event was approved. Examples may include a new venue, new physical discipline, added youth component, newly introduced machinery or dangerous materials, major format changes, overnight programming, or removal of a required safety control.

Minor administrative edits that do not change the actual risk profile generally do not require reapproval.

20. Legal, Regulatory, Venue, and Insurance Requirements

OCA sanctioning does not guarantee that an event is legally compliant, insurable, medically appropriate, profitable, or safe for every participant. Organizers remain responsible for applicable laws, permits, licenses, professional certifications, fire codes, food rules, athletic commission rules, animal-welfare standards, venue requirements, contracts, and insurance conditions.

Where specialized professional advice or approval is required, OCA policy should not be used as a substitute.

21. Safety Noncompliance and Sanctioning Consequences

OCA may impose conditions, require corrective action, suspend activity, withdraw sanctioning, or deny future sanctioning when an event presents serious or unreasonable safety concerns or fails to implement required controls.

Where appropriate, OCA may work with an organizer to revise the structure, add qualified personnel, improve emergency planning, change the venue, add equipment controls, or otherwise correct the deficiency. Immediate action may be required when participant or public safety is at risk.

22. Minimum Safety Readiness Checklist

Before the event begins, the organizer should be able to answer yes to the following:

- The venue is appropriate to the activity and emergency routes are known.
- Foreseeable hazards have been identified and reasonable controls assigned.
- Required qualified officials, technical personnel, medical resources, or specialty supervisors are in place.
- Equipment, tools, competition surfaces, and critical technical systems have been checked.
- A person with authority to pause or stop unsafe activity is identified.
- Weather or environmental thresholds are defined where relevant.
- Accessibility and participant-specific needs have been reviewed.
- Youth/vulnerable-adult safeguarding requirements are separately satisfied where applicable.
- Incident and emergency contact procedures are available to staff.
- The organizer understands that OCA sanctioning does not replace legal, insurance, venue, or discipline-specific safety requirements.

23. The OCA Safety Principle

Open competition works because OCA can say yes to unusual ideas without pretending every idea is automatically safe in every form. A responsible organizer is allowed to build a demanding, physical, technical, theatrical, strange, or gloriously niche competition. The organizer is not allowed to treat preventable serious harm as a creative feature.

The standard is proportionate safety: understand the activity, understand the venue, understand the people, control the hazards you reasonably can, and stop when the conditions no longer justify continuing.

BOTTOM LINE

The event can be weird. The safety plan cannot be imaginary.

Related OCA Materials

- OCA Event Sanctioning Guide.
- Competition Integrity and Safeguarding Policy.
- OCA Code of Conduct.
- OCA Event Organizer Handbook & Field Guide.

- Applicable discipline-specific rules, venue requirements, permits, insurance terms, and law.

FAIR PLAY. WILD IDEAS. FIRM SAFETY STANDARDS.

This policy establishes general OCA safety expectations. It does not replace applicable law, professional advice, venue rules, insurance obligations, medical protocols, or discipline-specific technical safety standards.