

6.5 Rules

6.5.1 Four Hour Rule

Background - USA Swimming Rule 205.3.1F reads: “With the exception of championship meets the program in all other age group competition shall be planned to allow the events for swimmers 12 years and younger to be completed in four (4) hours or less for a timed finals session or in a total of eight (8) hours or less per day for a preliminaries and finals meet.”

Middle Atlantic has determined that the “4-Hour Rule” shall also apply to the following meet sessions:

- ? any Prelims or Timed Finals session which includes “BB” or “C” level swimmers, including 13 years and older
- ? all mini meets

Meets Exempt from the “4-Hour Rule” are:

- ? all Middle Atlantic hosted meets, including Junior Olympics
- ? Middle Atlantic Regional (BB/C) and Mini- Championships
- ? meets limited to “A” level or higher swimmers
- ? a (single event) distance meet (e.g., 1650 or combined 1650 Free/400 IM meet) where swimmers can be notified of the time for their swim

Penalty for non-compliance

Any Club holding a meet session subject to the 4-hour rule must run a projected timeline for that session using a 30-second time interval (or 20-second if over/under starting procedure is used); the timeline should be run on the seeded session using the Hy-Tek Meet Manager software. Any session that exceeds four hours is subject to the following fines or penalties unless the session is actually conducted in less than four hours as certified on the Post-meet report submitted to MAS.

1. Forfeiture of the meet entry fee for those heats beginning after the 4- hour limit was reached.
2. Loss of Sanction by the Club for a subsequent meet, or loss of the right to bid on meets in the next season.

In addition, a \$25 fine may be imposed for not submitting pre-meet information to the MA office at the appropriate time. This fine may be increased to \$50 if a meet session is found to significantly exceed four hours.

The above fines and penalties will be imposed at the discretion of the Admin Chair subject to review by the MA Board of Directors [and/or the MA Board of Review](#).

Procedure

1. A Meet Host should consider the following possible format modifications in order to avoid exceeding the 4-hour session limit. In all cases, notification of such possible changes should be included in the Meet Information. All changes to the meet format are subject to review by MA Technical Planning and/or the MA Admin Chair:
 - a. Split the session into separate sessions for each age-group.
 - b. Eliminate all relays from the session.
 - c. Create a separate session for distance events 400 yards/meters or longer.
 - d. Accept no further entries when the 4-hour time limit is reached.
 - e. Limit the number of heats in specified events.
 - f. Eliminate a complete event.
 - g. Reduce the number of permitted events for each swimmer - e.g., events per swimmer reduced from 5 to 4 per day. This must be applied to all swimmers in the session.
2. The meet information must include the statement that the Meet Director reserves the right to limit events, heats, swimmers or adjust the format to conform with the 4-hour rule.
3. Whatever action is taken to reduce the time, all teams competing in that session must be notified of the change in format. Notification by e-mail to the Team Contact provided with the meet entry is acceptable.