

## **Summary of 2015 Changes to AIDA Competition Rules**

**To:** AIDA Nationals, Judges, Athletes, Instructors and Organizers  
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**Date:** 1 January 2015  
**Re:** 2015 Changes to AIDA Competition Rules

This memo summarizes changes to the AIDA Competition Rules that go into effect 1 January 2015. The Assembly approved these changes in May 2104 (4 line items), in July 2014 (the safety changes), and in September 2015 (12 line items, and the “clean up” document). A complete copy of the current Rules is posted on the AIDA website ([www.aidainternational.org](http://www.aidainternational.org)).

The number of changes reflects the length of time since the Rules were last updated: 2009 (six years ago). To stay current, rules for any sport must be updated periodically; going forward, we expect smaller, more frequent updates to the Rules (likely on an annual cycle, with updates becoming effective on 1 January of the year after which they are approved).

If you have questions regarding this summary, or any section of the Rules that was updated for 2015, please send them to: [board@aidainternational.org](mailto:board@aidainternational.org). We will update this summary as needed.

### **Changes Other than Safety**

**1.5 Official Time.** Official time for all AIDA International competitions is coordinated Universal Time (UTC), corrected for the location of the competition. For example, Central Europe Time is UTC +01.00. This allows athletes, organizers, and judges to synchronize watches with the Internet (e.g. [time.is](http://time.is)).

**2.3.6; 3.4.1.1 World Records in Competition.** At World Championships and World Record events, judges are not permitted to judge athletes from their own country. Starting 1 January 2015, this rule also applies to world records in competition: in order to have an AIDA world record in competition, at least one judge (Level B or higher) must be from a country other than that of the athlete.

**2.3.9 International Competitions.** All competitions that post results to the AIDA Ranking List are now International Competitions. Other competitions, which may be sanctioned by National organizations—but which don’t follow all of the Rules, or which don’t have two AIDA judges—are National competitions; they do not post results to the AIDA Ranking List. International Competitions must have two AIDA judges (Level E or higher).

**3.1.15 Touch Rule prior to Start (CWT, CNF, FIM).** Prior to 2015, prior to the start of a performance, it was unclear as to whether a coach may touch an athlete prior to the start of performance. Beginning in 2015, for CWT, CNF and FIM, a coach may hold or touch an athlete prior to the start of a performance (i.e. submersion of airways). This is intended to permit coaches to support athletes in open water performances, where conditions (e.g. wind, waves) can make it difficult for the athlete to maintain position near the line in a relaxed manner.

**3.1.15 etc. Touch Rule after Surfacing.** Prior to 2015, after surfacing any touching of the athlete resulted in disqualification. Beginning in 2015, after surfacing a non-supportive touch by a staff person (e.g. safety diver, photographer, judge) does not result in disqualification. Any touching by or of a coach or friend still results in disqualification.

**3.1.7.1 National ID Cards.** Beginning in 2015, an athlete may show a national ID card (stating nationality) in lieu of a passport.

**3.1.17.3 Surface Protocol.** Beginning in 2015, for all AIDA International competitions and record attempts, the verbal signal (“I’m OK”, or “I am OK”) must be given in English.

**3.6 Surface Video Review.** Beginning in 2015, judges will review surface video (for depth disciplines, in addition to bottom video) for (i) each world record event performance, (ii) each performance exceeding a world record in competition, and (iii) the top five performances per sex per discipline at AIDA World Championships.

**3.1.14.1 “Post Blackout Mechanical Movements”.** Prior to 2015, a judge could disqualify an athlete for “post blackout mechanical movement”. This “symptom” has no basis in science or medicine; such disqualifications were subjective or random. Beginning in 2015, the “PBMM” rule has been eliminated. So the symptoms for blackout will remain as in Rule 3.1.14.1:

Each of the following symptoms will disqualify the performance for “Black-Out”:

- Cardiac arrest
- Respiratory arrest
- Loss of consciousness (blackout)
- Conscious, but unable to maintain the airway out of the water.

These are objective symptoms easily observed in most cases. With an athlete at the surface who may be losing consciousness, a judge may wait to see if the airway dips to avoid disqualifying an athlete who may be conscious (care should of course be taken to avoid an athlete inhaling water).

**3.2.20 Minimum Number of Athletes for Competition with World Record Status.** Prior to 2015, organizers could disguise world record events as “mini competitions”; this allowed them to select preferred judges, and avoid other requirements of world record events. Beginning in 2015, in order to be eligible for “world record” status, a competition must have at least seven registered athletes, and at least five athletes performing. Organizers unsure of meeting those

requirements should announce a world record event for the record attempt performance(s).

**7.1.4 etc. Tinted Lenses.** Beginning in 2015, tinted lenses are no longer prohibited for depth disciplines. This reflects the use of fluid filled goggles by many athletes, which are also opaque.

**7.1.7.2; 11.8.1 Grab Rule (CWT; CNF).** Prior to 2015, at the start of a dive, an athlete was prohibited from grabbing (i.e. holding) the line after airways are submersed. This practice provides little or no advantage to athletes, but resulted in frequent penalties. Beginning in 2015, it is no longer a penalty for an athlete to grab the line at or above the surface after airways are submersed; pulling remains prohibited, as does grabbing with complete hand below the surface.

Prior to 2015, at the end of a dive, an athlete was prohibited from grabbing/pulling at or above the surface, until airways are above the surface. This caused athletes to delay the grabbing motion on surfacing, which could be dangerous to hypoxic athletes (especially in training, without a full safety team). Beginning in 2015, it is no longer a penalty or disqualification for an athlete to grab the line at or above the surface at the end of a performance, in connection with surfacing; both grabbing and pulling at or above the surface are permitted.

**7.5.3 etc. Inflatable Suits and Vest.** Beginning in 2015, inflatable suits and vests are no longer permitted for CWT, CNF, FIM or VWT. This reflects the risk of embolism with such devices.

**9.2.5; 10.2.4 Lanyard Use for Sled Disciplines.** Prior to 2015, lanyards were permitted, but not required, for VWT and NLT. Beginning in 2015, lanyards are required. This follows the loss of a sled diver in 2011, who was not properly wearing a lanyard.

**11.6.2 Breaking the Surface Rule (DYN; DNF).** Prior to 2015, an athlete would be penalized for breaking the surface outside of the 5m “grace zone” at each end of the pool. This rule was difficult to enforce equitably in some situations (e.g. more than two competition lanes; sun glare). In addition, breaking the surface does not benefit the athlete: there is more drag breaking the surface than staying below it. Beginning in 2015, there is no longer a penalty for breaking the surface, so long as the athlete does not (i) swim an entire length at the surface, or (ii) perform arm recovery above the water.

**11.6.3; 11.6.4 Grab Rule (DYN; DNF).** Prior to 2015, at the end of a performance, an athlete was prohibited from grabbing/pulling at or above the surface (i.e. a lane marker or pool side), until airways are above the surface. This caused athletes to delay the grabbing motion on surfacing, which could be dangerous to hypoxic athletes (especially in training, without a full safety team). Beginning in 2015, it is no longer a penalty for an athlete to grab at the end of a performance, in connection with surfacing.

**12.3.2; 12.3.6 Jury Deliberation.** Prior to 2015, judges were not permitted to discuss the subject of a protest. This was to limit discussion time (which in some

cases had become excessive, delaying results). The ability of judges to discuss a matter before them, however, is fundamental to developed judicial systems. Beginning in 2015, judges will be able to discuss the subject of a protest, subject to limitations on time by the jury president. That said, no member of the jury should be allowed to bully other members (including those more junior).

### **Safety Changes**

Safety changes are located in Section 4.6 of the Rules.

**4.6.1 Limitation of Announcements.** Prior to 2015, organizers, judges and doctors were unable to limit athletes' announcements, even where they appeared to endanger the athlete. Beginning in 2015, an organizer may limit announcements to maximum of 10m beyond the depth the athlete certifies to organizer he/she has done in last three months. More information on this rule will be provided in the coming weeks.

**4.6.2 Sonar.** Sonar has become common at depth competitions, allowing organizers to track athletes' depths, identify issues as they arise, and guide safety divers. Beginning in 2015, Sonar is required for depth disciplines at AIDA World Championships, AIDA World Record Events, and all competitions with world record status. Sonar is recommended (but not required) for depth disciplines at all other competitions, unless the maximum competition depth is within sight of safety divers.

**4.6.3 Prohibition of Recommencing Descent.** Prior to 2015, athletes were allowed to turn early (e.g. due to an equalization problem), then recommence descent (e.g. if they equalized). This practice appears to be dangerous: it was a significant factor in a fatal accident in 2013, and also in a near-fatal accident in October 2014. Beginning in 2015, athletes are prohibited from recommencing descent, once they have started to ascent. More information on this rule will be provided in the coming weeks.

**4.6.4 Consequences of Squeezes.** Prior to 2015, organizers, judges and doctors were unable to restrict an athlete with a significant chest squeeze from diving, even when continued diving threatened his/her health and safety. Chest squeezes were a significant factor in a fatal accident in 2013, and have resulted in other serious injuries; the risk appears to increase with repetitive squeezes. Beginning in 2015, the competition medic (in coordination with the safety and judge teams) may restrict an athlete with a significant chest squeeze from continuing to dive in a competition. More information on this rule will be provided in the coming weeks.

**4.6.5 Training & Equipment.** Beginning in 2015, the following medical training is required for AIDA World Championships, AIDA World Record Events, and all competitions with world record status:

- Advanced trauma
- Airway management

--Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS)

--Not required, but recommended where practical: [at least one other paramedic or safety diver trained in ACLS](#)

Beginning in 2015, the following equipment is required for AIDA World Championships, AIDA World Record Events, and all competitions with world record status (additional equipment is recommended but not required; please see Section 4.6.5.3 and 4.6.5.4):

--Pulse oximeter

--Stethoscope

--Pocket masks

--Mask(s) for O2

**4.6.6 Incident Reporting System.** Incident reporting systems are becoming standard for dive agencies, in order to collect information on incidents, and prevent identifiable risks. Beginning 1 January 2015, the organizer of an AIDA competition (coordinating with the head judge and doctor) is required to report safety related incidents at the competition on AIDA's online Incident Reporting System (<https://apps.aidainternational.org/incidentReport.php>). More information on this rule will be provided in the coming weeks.