



Starting Block Height and Depth Recommendations

S.R. Smith manufactures a wide range of starting blocks for use at all levels of competitive swimming, and takes into consideration rules and regulations from the Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA), USA Swimming, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA), and the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC). S.R. Smith also recognizes that state and local building codes apply in various jurisdictions.

Starting blocks are specified in each organizations rules and regulations at various minimum water depths:

FINA: 4 feet 5 inches

USA Swimming: 4 feet for competition, 6 feet for teaching, 6 feet 7 inches for championship meets

NCAA: 4 feet

NFSHSA: 4 feet

MAHC: 6 feet 7 inches (proposed)

S.R. Smith takes these minimum water depths into consideration on each order for starting platforms.

S.R. Smith also considers the current research into diving safety. In a study done by the University of Indiana's Councilman Center for Science of Swimming¹, it was determined that height above water does not act in a linear fashion with head depth during racing starts. This is reflected in a number of state and local codes that regulate the height over water for starting blocks in relation to the depth of the pool.

With this information, S.R. Smith suggests the following recommendations for maximum starting block height over water:

Less than 4 feet of water depth: no starting block

4 feet – 6 feet of water depth: 18 inches

6 feet or more of water depth: 29.5 inches

S.R. Smith understands that regulations of governing bodies, including those listed above along with state and local codes, supersede these recommendations when they require additional depth. For example, a pool that will host FINA swim meets cannot place blocks in water depths of less than 4 feet 5 inches because it does not meet the minimum depth for FINA. S.R. Smith will change these recommendations as it acquires additional information from new studies or governing regulations change

¹"Block Height Influences the Head Depth of Competitive Race Starts", *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education*, 2011, 5, 174-186