

OVERVIEW AND DIFFERENCES OF THE USATF EVENT SANCTIONING PROGRAM AND COURSE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

People often are confused by the differences in of two of USA Track & Field's most popular services; Event Sanctioning and Course Certification.

In a nutshell:

Obtaining a USATF **sanction** involves filling out a *sanction agreement* to form a relationship between the sanctioned event and USATF. Basically, it means that an event has agreed to follow applicable USATF rules and will be afforded the benefits as outlined below.

A sanction is not related to the length of a road race course. Course measurement is called **Course Certification** and is a completely separate process.

Each of these services is explained in much greater detail below.

EVENT SANCTION PROGRAM

Benefits afforded to USATF-sanctioned events

We are often asked why events should obtain a USATF sanction. There are many benefits to obtaining a sanction. These include:

1. **Increased Prestige.** For many events, the USATF sanction improves the event's public perception as you have the right to publicize this status to your participants, sponsors and community. A sanction tells athletes that an event is being run according to defined rules. Sanctioned events also have the right to use the USATF Sanctioned Event logo to promote the fact that the national governing body has sanctioned the event.
2. **Liability Insurance.** Most governmental entities including cities, counties, state highway departments, parks and community centers require general liability insurance for all events. The cost of a sanction is very inexpensive compared to the prices of most event insurance policies. It is important to note that events which are already insured may choose to waive the insurance coverage and pay a lower sanction fee.
3. **Medical Insurance for Athletes.** Any athlete who is a USATF member and is injured while participating in a sanctioned event will be eligible for secondary medical insurance coverage for the injury. The insurance not only provides valuable coverage to USATF members, but it serves as a valuable deterrent to lawsuits.
4. **Records.** In general, for non-road events, a sanction is required for an official track & field record to be accepted. Additionally only marks established in USATF sanctioned events and those events recognized by USATF (collegiate (NCAA) and high school (NHSSF) sanctioned events) are accepted for USA Outdoor and Indoor Track & Field Championship qualifying



purposes.

5. Resolving Disputes. If requested, USATF may act as a mediator in disputes between athletes and sanctioned events.
6. Promotion. Sanctioned events may be included in calendars published at the local and national levels, as appropriate. Each Association may provide additional benefits to its sanctioned events.

As part of the sanction agreement, USATF agrees to do the following:

1. Include the event in the USATF comprehensive liability insurance policy. Essentially this means that the event organizers have liability insurance. Sponsors, towns or other involved parties may be included in this policy for no extra charge. Events that are already insured may choose to waive insurance and pay a lower sanction fee.
2. Serve as an arbitrator if either the event or athletes feel that rules were violated or improper conduct occurred. If requested by an event director, USATF will assign one or more officials in advance to serve as referees in the case of protests (Note that these referees will not necessarily be on site, but will be available by phone following the event). Federal Law has specifically charged USATF with the responsibility to ensure that all prizes are awarded in a fair manner and as advertised. Both USATF members and sanctioned events have agreed to follow USATF rules. This does NOT mean that USATF will actively pursue every alleged rules violation - rather it means that USATF will investigate complaints and take appropriate action.

As part of the sanction agreement, the sanctioned event agrees to do the following:

1. Follow applicable USATF rules. This provides a standard of competition that athletes can rely on. The goal is to provide a framework for conducting the event and protection for athletes who expect rules to be followed, not to hamper events and participants with unnecessary or inappropriate rules. The rules also give race directors a starting point for organizing and managing their events.
2. Take the necessary precautions to provide for the safety and medical needs for all participants. These requirements can vary from event to event and USATF can provide the necessary guidance to provide for the safest arena possible for athletes, spectators, and volunteers, as well as minimizing exposure to potential lawsuits.
3. Indicate on the entry form that the event is sanctioned by USATF. Only sanctioned events are permitted to use the USATF logo on their entry form.
4. Submit a post-event form summarizing the results of the event.

COURSE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The USATF course certification program exists to produce road racecourses that are "reasonably accurate." The idea is to produce the shortest course that we can be almost sure is at least the advertised distance. Our measurement method, as with most certification processes, has a margin of error. Our margin of error is plus or minus ten meters per 10,000 meters, so, when establishing a course to be advertised as 10,000 meters, we aim for a distance of 10,010 meters.

The USATF course certification program is not connected to USATF race sanctioning; a sanctioned race can use an uncertified course and an unsanctioned race can use a certified course.

For any road-running performance to be accepted as a record, or be nationally ranked, it must be run on a USATF-certified course. In addition the certification program is very important to the average road racer, as well as those of exceptional speed. Most runners like to compare performances run on different courses and such comparisons are very difficult if course distances are not reliable. No one can establish a personal best if courses are not accurate.

Because courses often degrade over time (or exact data is forgotten), all course certifications expire automatically 10 years after the year of issue. Expired courses may be renewed and restored to active status upon application to your state certifier using our [Certification Form](http://www.usatf.org/events/courses/certification/manual/appendix-f.asp) (<http://www.usatf.org/events/courses/certification/manual/appendix-f.asp>). The renewal procedure requires you to obtain a copy of the course's official Certificate & Map from the [RRTC Course Registrar](http://www.usatf.org/about/directory/info.asp?parent=Long+Distance+Running+Division&group=Road+Running+Technical+Council) (<http://www.usatf.org/about/directory/info.asp?parent=Long+Distance+Running+Division&group=Road+Running+Technical+Council>) and, based on the information in its certification map, inspect the course thoroughly. Then you must submit a copy of the certificate & map with the completed renewal form to your state certifier.

A list of Regional Course Certifiers is available at <http://www.usatf.org/events/courses/certification/certifiers.asp>.
