

Athletics Ontario Road & Trail Sanction Criteria

April 2026

As stated by Athletics Canada, your receipt of an Athletics Ontario Sanction formalizes the agreement that your race will adhere to these stipulated racing regulations and other relevant safety guidelines put forth by the governing body. This sanction criteria applies to Road, Trail, and snowshoe running races in Ontario.



- Once your application is approved you will obtain your Sanction logo.
- Your Sanction logo is required to be visible on your website and registration page to illustrate to your participants that your race follows the quality and safety guidelines set forth by the governing body.
- Your sanction logo is valid for the application year only and must be applied for each year.
- Do not place old sanction logos on following year races, a valid application must be submitted and approved before placing it on your website each year
- If Sanction Criteria is not adhered to, insurance coverage may be null and void
- Sanction Criteria is subject to change, please visit our webpage dedicated for race directors here for updated criteria

Athletics Ontario Sanction and Safety Audit

- All races are subject to a Sanction and Safety Audit before, during or after a sanction application has been submitted.
 - The Sanction and Safety Audit must include providing the following:
 - Emergency Action Plan
 - Course & Traffic Management Plan
 - Volunteer Recruitment, Training and Retention Plan
 - Aid Station Set Up
 - Finish & Dispersal Zone Set Up and Flow
- Any race failing to follow the required sanction and safety criteria may not be eligible in the following year. Clear modes of resolution will be required to obtain a future sanction; the modes of resolution are subject to review and approval is at the discretion of Athletics Ontario.
- Any race that repeatedly fails to follow the required sanction criteria may not be eligible for a future sanction if managed by the same head race director and may be required to work with an external safety officer at the race's own cost

Emergency Action Plan

- A qualified, dedicated, and identified, first aid attendant must be present for the duration of the race.
- It is recommended that a comprehensive medical response program be created under the direction of a qualified medical professional

An Emergency Action Plan must be in place, involving a basic plan in case of:

- Medical emergency
- Adverse weather conditions, or other natural disaster
- Active aggression

The Emergency Action Plan should include:

- Communication – clear mode of communication between all parties (head aid station captains, course captains, medical, and volunteers) throughout the racecourse via walkie-talkie or cellular telephones
- Response - expected Plan of Action in the moment
- Access - Geographical access points

Course Management & Participant Communication

Communication

- Volunteers must be adequately trained with a clear understanding of their roles and with a confirmed back-up volunteer (should they fall ill on race day, etc.)
- All volunteers, course marshals, and medical staff must have a clear communication plan in case of an accident or emergency
- A scripted plan must be communicated to both participants and volunteers prior to race day about the race
 - This must include potential environmental or course hazards that may exist (such as high heat or humidity, cold temperatures, potholes, railway tracks, black ice, poison ivy, sunrise/sunset times) for participant preparation
 - This must also include communication on what the participant should look for on the course (flags, directional signs, warnings about upcoming water / aid stations)
 - An easily understood racecourse map must be made available to participants and volunteers prior to the event including:
 - locations of all aid stations
 - instructions for what to do in an emergency
- There must be a clear signage plan (both direction and distance markers) that is easy for participants to follow and clearly visible.

Traffic flow and course design

- Must be structured such as to avoid collisions or bottlenecks around the start, turnarounds, out and backs, and finish line
- If the racecourse is an out and back configuration, ensure clear and concise communication to participants about the flow of running (clockwise vs counterclockwise)
- A lead vehicle (bike, motorcycle, vehicle) for road races is recommended for all races and required by mass-participation events.
- Confidence Markers visible (signs that participants are going the right way, directional signs; specific-coloured flags), when course marshals are not visible

Traffic Management Plan

- A clear traffic plan must exist that aims to reduce vehicle (bikes and cars) and pedestrian interaction, Intersections, and highly populated areas
- Traffic controlled at all intersections and parking lots in use that have access to the course
Traffic cones (or other clear markings such as flags, if cones deemed improbable because of a narrow trail) along the entire route, except where the entire roadway is closed to traffic
- Ontario road races must have a Traffic Management plan that is [Ontario Transportation Book 7 compliant](#)
 - **Non-signalized intersections** - This must be a hard closure with barricades or orange/black barrels (TC-54) with a Road Closed sign (RB-92). It can be monitored by a Volunteer Course Marshal.
 - **Soft Closures** - This applies to intersections where vehicles can pass safely through large gaps between runners. Volunteer Course Marshals are not permitted to direct traffic. If they do, the liability falls on the race director. Traffic directing must be carried out by a paid duty police officer or a traffic control flagger. In some municipalities, this may include traffic wardens, special constables, and police auxiliaries. If the situation is appropriate, Volunteer Course Marshals may approach drivers and advise them of the closure, designated detour alternatives, and to proceed when safe.

Aid Stations

- Aid stations must be readily accessible
- Water/Aid stations must be placed minimally every 3km
 - Aid stations must include electrolyte fluid every 5km for races between 5km-20km, and at least every 5km for races over 20km
- If this is not possible (i.e. trail races with limited access to water) ensure clear communication to participants about self-hydration options such as hand-held hydration or hydration packs
- A hydration plan must be in place taking into consideration:
 - Distance
 - Time of year
 - Course design
 - Participant profile
- It is recommended that directional signs indicating upcoming aid stations are communicated at least 100m before the station to avoid participant collisions
- For races that occupy the entire road, it is recommended to place aid stations on both sides of the road to avoid participant collisions
- Adequate supplies (water, electrolyte, cups and water vessels) must be readily available for aid station volunteers.

Aid Station Hygiene Guidelines

- Aid Station volunteers must be adequately trained on sanitary practices and efficient participant retrieval (volunteer must hold the cup at the bottom with palm open and flat and not place fingers inside the cup)
- Aid station volunteers must be provided with hand sanitizer, gloves (and soap and water when possible)

Medical Stations

- The number of medical stations available must take into consideration of the geography, and distance, participant profile of your event and must be easily accessible
- Accessibility:
 - Consideration must be given how a participant and/or ambulance can access a medical station.
 - Consideration must be given how to communicate and transport an injured participant to the closest Medical Station, hospital, or ambulance access.

Further Documentation

All participants, volunteers (and spectators when possible) must have access to the [AO Sanctioned Race Participant Feedback Survey](#) after the event

Race directors must read and understand the [Athletics Canada Race Director Guide](#)

Thank you for continuing to provide a safe and welcoming environment for your participants to enjoy, year after year.

Please submit any inquiries to: roadtrail@athleticsontario.ca