

## HOT WEATHER POLICY

Policy number	S 002/14	Version	1
Drafted by	Dean Russell	Approved by Board on	10/07/14
Responsible person	Sport Manager Tournament Manager	Scheduled review date	01/06/15

### INTRODUCTION

Every year in areas across New South Wales hot and/or heat wave conditions hits our State. At that time New South Wales Touch Association (NSWTA) has requests from associations, individuals and parents asking:

"Should our sporting event be modified or cancelled?" or

"Should our Training be modified or cancelled?"

To assist the NSWTA, its Regions and Affiliates plus coaches, teachers and other individuals when considering their duty of care responsibilities, NSWTA has adopted this set of guidelines and a checklist.

### PURPOSE

This policy seeks to ensure that members, staff and office-bearers know their respective duties and obligations. The guidelines aim to assist in exercising safely in hot conditions.

### POLICY

Staff and members shall follow the guidelines as outlined in the duties and obligations set out in below.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

The Sport Manager (SM) with the Event Manager (EM) shall be responsible for including this policy in the induction package provided to new Staff members.

The EM shall be responsible for ensuring that a copy of this policy is available for reference at all NSWTA events.

The SM shall be responsible for ensuring that a copy of this policy is available for reference to all NSWTA staff, Regions and Affiliates.

The General Manager (GM) shall be responsible for making a ruling on any point in dispute in this policy.

## **PROCEDURES**

This policy shall be included in the induction package provided to new staff members.

A copy of this policy shall be available for reference at all NSWTA events.

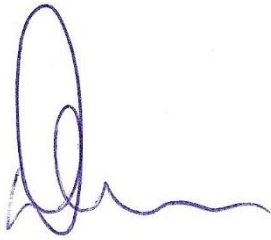
A copy of this policy shall be available for NSWTA Regions and Affiliates.

Any point in dispute in this policy shall be resolved by the GM.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS/RESOURCES**

- Australian Sports Commission Guideline
- NSW Department of Sport and Recreation Guidelines
- Australian Sports Medicine
- [www.bom.com.au](http://www.bom.com.au)

## **AUTHORISATION**



Dean Russell- General Manager

10/07/2014

NEW SOUTH WALES TOUCH ASSOCIATION

The guidelines are not binding and NSWTA reminds all parties that they must act responsibly. We encourage a common sense approach and consideration of the comfort and well being of all individuals including participants and officials.

Modification or cancellation of events, training or withdrawal from participation may be appropriate even in circumstances falling outside these recommendations.

When considering modifying, postponing or cancelling a specific sporting event or training there are many factors that need to be considered. Exercise in the heat creates competitive demands on the cardiovascular system, which is required to increase the blood supply to the exercising muscles. At the same time it must regulate body temperature by increasing skin blood flow in order to produce the sweat that keeps the body cool.

High intensity exercise in a hot environment, with the associated fluid loss and elevation of body temperature, can lead to:

DEHYDRATION - HEAT EXHAUSTION - HEAT STROKE

### **DEHYDRATION**

Fluid loss occurs during exercise, mainly due to perspiration and respiration. It makes an athlete more susceptible to fatigue and muscle cramps. Inadequate fluid replacement before, during and after exercise will lead to excessive dehydration and may lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

### **HEAT EXHAUSTION**

#### **Dehydration can lead to heat exhaustion:**

- Characterised by a high heart rate, dizziness, headache, loss of endurance/skill/confusion and nausea.
- The skin may still be cool/sweating, but there will be signs of developing vasoconstriction, eg pale colour.
- Athletes will pass little urine, which will be highly concentrated.
- Cramps may be associated with dehydration.

The rectal temperature may be up to 40°C and the athlete may collapse on stopping activity.

### **HEAT STROKE**

Severe dehydration may lead to heat stroke.

1. Characterised similar to heat exhaustion, but with a dry skin, confusion and collapse.

2. Heat stroke may arise in an athlete who has not been identified as suffering from heat exhaustion and has persisted in further activity.

This is a potentially fatal condition and must be treated immediately by a medical professional.

Heat exhaustion/stroke can still occur even in the presence of good hydration.

New South Wales Touch Associations recommends athletes drink:

- at least 500mls (2-3 glasses) ½ to 1 hour prior to exercise
- at least 200mls (1 glass) every 10-15 minutes during exercise

and after exercise drink 1.5 times your fluid deficit to ensure you are fully re-hydrated.

**FACTORS TO CONSIDER PRIOR TO CANCELATION**

The following are factors to be considered in modifying or cancelling of sporting events or training. Remember to not only take players into account, but to also remember Referees, Officials and Volunteers.

NSWTA has compiled a checklist and risk management sheet to guide your association in making that decision.

**1. Temperature**

*The Ambient Temperature*

Suitable for hot, dry days

AMBIENT TEMPERATURE	RISK OF THERMAL INJURY
25 – 31	Moderate
32 – 37	High
38 and above	Extreme

**Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT)**

Suitable for hot, humid days

WBGT	RISK OF THERMAL INJURY
23 – 27	Moderate
28 – 29	High
30 and above	Extreme

*WBGT and its measurement are not currently considered in Australian sport except in a small number of isolated elite sporting competitions and events. The adoption of policies (General Population) that require the use of WBGT as the defining measurement for decisions relating to the cancellation of events are recognised as being difficult to implement . At present, issues such as cost, convenience and availability of accurate, on-site measurement of WBGT are all prohibiting factors in the adoption of appropriate policies for all sporting codes played in hot weather conditions.*

Guidelines for training

- At extreme thermal risk, cancel training (allowing swimming)
- At high thermal risk consider modifying training

**2. Clothing**

Type of clothing is vital in minimizing health risks associated with exercise in heat. Fabrics that minimize heat storage and enhance sweat evaporation should be selected. Light coloured, loose fitting clothes, made of natural fibres or composite fabrics with high wicking (absorption) properties, that provide for adequate ventilation are recommended as the most appropriate clothing in the heat. This clothing should further complement the existing practices in Australia that protects the skin against permanent damage from the sun.

This should be applied to the clothing worn by players, referees, other officials and volunteers.

If clothing is worn for protective reasons, ensure that clothing is worn only whilst training and competing in hot weather. Remove non-breathable clothing as soon as possible if the participants or officials are feeling unwell in hot conditions. Commence cooling the body

immediately via ventilation and / or a cool spray such as a Soaker hose or a hand-held spray, a fan or ice packs to the groin, arm pits and neck regions.

### **3. Duration and Intensity of an event**

- The combination of extreme environmental conditions and sustained vigorous exercise is particularly hazardous for the athlete. The greater the intensity of the exercise the greater the risk of heat related symptoms, eg. distance running is more of a problem than stop-start team events.
- Player and Official rotation may also be considered
- A reduction in playing time and extending rest periods with opportunities to re-hydrate during the event would help safe guard the health of participants.
- Provision of extra water for wetting face, clothes and hair is also important.
- A fan to enhance air movement would be beneficial

### **4. Acclimatisation of the Participant**

Acclimatisation of the Participant includes the umpires, other officials and volunteers as well as the players.

Preparation for exercise under hot conditions should include a period of acclimatisation to those conditions, especially if the athlete is travelling from a cool / temperate climate to compete under hot / humid conditions.

It has been reported that children will acclimatize slower than adults.

Regular exercise in hot conditions will facilitate adaptation to help prevent the athlete's performance deteriorating, or suffering from heat illness, during later competitions. A period of 7-10 days of 60 minutes acclimatisation activity each day provides substantial preparation for safe exercise in the heat.

### **5. Fitness Levels / Athletic Ability of Participant**

A number of physical/physiological characteristics of the athlete will influence the capacity to tolerate exercise in the heat, including body size and endurance fitness.

In endurance events an accomplished yet non-elite runner, striving to exceed their performance may suffer from heat stress. The potential for heat related illnesses would be exacerbated if they have not acclimatised to the conditions and have failed to hydrate correctly.

An overweight and unconditioned athlete, umpire, official and volunteer will generally also be susceptible to heat stress.

Please refer to Sports Medicine Australia's brochure "Beat the Heat" available from NSWTA.

## **6. Age and Gender of Participant**

**Female Participants** may suffer more during exercise in the heat, due to their greater percentage of body fat.

**Young Children** are especially at risk in the heat. Prior to puberty, the sweating mechanism, essential for effective cooling, is poorly developed. The ratio between weight and surface area in the child is also such that the body absorbs heat rapidly in hot conditions.

In practical terms, child athletes must be protected from over-exertion in hot climates, especially when required to exercise for 30 minutes or longer.

Although children can acclimatise to exercise in the heat, they take longer to do so than adults.

Coaches should be aware of this and limit training for non-acclimatised children during exposure to hot environments.

Veteran Participants may also cope less well with exercise in the heat. Reduced cardiac function is thought to be responsible for this effect.

## **7. Rules of the Game (Hydration Opportunities)**

While the game of Touch lends itself to assist in hydration management with constant interchanges you should still consider the following in running your event.

### **Will your players and officials be able to consume enough water during the event?**

To avoid excessive dehydration during exercise in the heat, fluid (preferably water) should be consumed before, during and after exercise.

Even a small degree of dehydration will cause a decrease in performance.

Associations may consider dividing games into shorter playing periods rather than halves to allow for extra breaks.

Coaches may consider alternative training times and venues during Hot Weather.

## **8. Time of Day**

Where possible avoid the hottest part of the day (usually 11:00am - 3:00pm). Scheduling events outside of this time should be a consideration throughout any summer competition, training or event, regardless of the temperature.

## **9. Surface Type**

A shaded / protected grass exercise surface does not attract and retain as much heat as other surfaces (eg solid black asphalt)

The exercise surface type and the amount of direct sunlight vary significantly with different sporting activities and therefore must be analysed for each individual event.

## **10. Venue of an Event**

An air-conditioned indoor venue will provide less of a problem whilst a hot indoor venue or an outside venue without shade cannot constitute an acceptable environment.

Airflow should be considered, including fans in change rooms or appropriately placed.

## **11. Predisposed Medical Conditions**

It is important to know if any of your athletes, umpires, officials or volunteers have a medical condition or are taking medication that may predispose them to heat illness.

Examples of illnesses that will put the participant or official at a high risk of Heat Illness include: asthma, diabetes, pregnancy, heart conditions and epilepsy. Some medications and conditions may need special allowances.

Participants and officials who present with an illness such as a Virus, Flu, Gastro, or feeling unwell are at an extreme risk of Heat Illness if exercising in Moderate to Hot Weather.

Participants or officials who may be affected by drugs or alcohol may be at an extreme risk of Heat Illness if exercising in moderate to hot weather.

## **12. Other Factors to Consider**

Preventative measures can be undertaken to minimise heat injuries. Examples include the provision of shade, hats, appropriate sunscreen, spray bottles and drinking water.

It is important to have trained personnel available to manage heat injuries.

In situations where heat problems may be expected, an experienced medical practitioner should be present.



Heat stroke is potentially life threatening. Any indication of this condition should be immediately referred for Medical Assessment.

**Complete your checklist**

Determine the point score for each item. (Some categories may not be exactly to your needs so you will need to use common sense, if in doubt choose higher value in order to err on the side of caution.)

**1. Temperature**

*Ambient Temperature*

< 25 degrees	2
25 – 31 degrees	10
32 – 37 degrees	14
38 degrees and above	20

*Or WBGT*

<23 degrees	2
23 – 27 degrees	10
28 – 29 degrees	14
30 degrees and above	20

**2. Overall duration of event**

Less than 30 mins	2
30 – 60 mins	4
60 mins to 2 hours	6
Greater than 2 hours	8

**3. Individual Intensity during the event**

Easy pace throughout	2
Moderate pace, breaks in intensity	4
Moderate pace throughout	6
Sustained effort with some breaks	8
Sustained effort throughout	10

**7. Time between available drinks**

Less than 15 minutes	2
15 to 25 minutes	4
25 to 35 minutes	6
35 to 45 minutes	8
45 minutes plus	10

**8. Time of the event**

Before 9am	2
After dark	2
9am til 11am	5
3pm til sunset	5
11am til 3pm	10

**9. Surface Type**

Water	1
Grass	2
Boards	4
Sand	6
Synthetic surface	6
Asphalt	8

**10. Venue**

Indoor air conditioning	1
Indoor no air conditioning	4
Outdoor	8

**4. Acclimatisation of Participants**

Used to hot weather conditions	2
Used to warm weather	5
Used to cool / cold conditions	8

**5. Athletic ability of individuals**

Elite fitness levels	2
Good fitness levels	6
Moderate fitness levels	6
Low fitness levels	8

**6. Age of Participants**

18 to 30	2
13 to 17	5
30 to 40	5
Over 40	8
Under 13	8

**11. Predisposed medical conditions of participants**

No	0
Yes – Asthma, Diabetes, Heart Condition, Pregnancy, etc.	High
Yes – Virus, Flu, Gastro, etc.	Extreme

**12. Other factors to consider**

Shade available during breaks	Yes / No
Water freely available at venue	Yes / No
Sports Trainer / First Aid person on site	Yes / No
Individual body fat of participants	High / Low

<b>TOTAL for Your Event:</b>	
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Recommended Guidelines for Sport

POINT SCORE	
<b>Above 75</b>	<b>NSWTA recommend you cancel your event, training and physical activity</b>
<b>66 to 74</b>	<p><b>NSWTA recommend you cancel or reschedule your event, training or physical activity if</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the ambient temperature is above 38</li> <li>2. the WBGT is above 30 or</li> <li>3. the age of participants (inc. officials) gets a point value of 8 (Children &amp; Veterans)</li> </ol> <p><b>If this is not the case and the event goes on then:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Extra breaks should be allowed.</li> <li>5. Shade should be provided.</li> <li>6. Airflow should be considered, including fans in change rooms or placed appropriately</li> </ol> <p>Promotion of fluid replacement should be actively encouraged. (Eg through announcements or via officials)</p>
<b>56 to 65</b>	<p><b>NSWTA recommend play may go ahead BUT</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Extra breaks should be allowed.</li> <li>8. Shade should be provided.</li> <li>9. Airflow should be considered, including Fans in Change Rooms or placed appropriately.</li> </ol> <p>Promotion of fluid replacement should be actively encouraged (Eg through announcements or officials)</p>
<b>55 and below</b>	<p><b>NSWTA recommends play with usual fluid replacement measures in place. Sports Medicine Australia advises sporting groups and individuals that:</b></p> <p>Cancellation of events or withdrawal from participation may be appropriate even in circumstances falling outside of these recommendations.</p>

	<p><b>Individuals can use the guidelines and point scores to ascertain whether they should be involved in a particular event.</b></p>
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**To obtaining weather conditions throughout New South Wales.**

**Web-site:** [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

**DISCLAIMER**

The information in this guideline is of a general nature. Individual circumstances may require modification of general advice from an appropriate health professional eg doctor, physiotherapist, Podiatrist or Dietician.