



EXTREME WEATHER POLICY

Extreme weather and environmental factors can affect the playing of Australian Football. While environmental factors will not regularly influence whether a game or training session should commence or continue to be played/undertaken, occasionally extremely adverse conditions may give rise to a need to assess whether players and/or officials are in environmental danger. This policy sets out the approach that the Club should adopt when assessing extreme weather and environmental conditions. All measures should be taken to ensure no players or officials are put at risk of serious health concerns by participating in a game or training session during extreme weather or environmental conditions.

1. Extreme Heat:

Heat-related stress can lead to impaired player performance (e.g. dizziness, headaches, collapse and illness). In its extreme form, heat can be life threatening. Preventing heat stress maintains optimum performance and improves recovery. To prevent heat stress, careful planning and preparation is required.

1.1 Preliminary Assessment:

Coaches (and/or other club officials)- escalated to the committee if required- should assess the heat stress risk by reviewing information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology for the specific location of the activity. Heat stress management strategies should be applied at all training sessions and matches.

1.2 Coaches Responsibility:

The Coach (and/or other club officials including the committee) should monitor environmental factors such as extreme heat both in matches and at any training session or activity administered by the Club. The Coach (and other club officials) should assess the heat stress risk by reviewing information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology for the specific location, and heat stress management strategies should be applied at all training sessions, activities and/or matches. The Coach (and other club officials) should follow the general management strategies/guidelines listed below:

- Make available cooling aids – spray bottles, sponges, fans (in rooms and on interchange bench) and shade
- Provide adequate fluids in appropriate drink bottles
- Ensure regular drink breaks and rest periods
- Provide for drink carriers during matches - increase the supply and availability of fluids by increasing the number of drink carriers entering, and the length of time they remain, on the field
- Monitor the amount of fluid being ingested by each players
- During training ensure that players are suitably attired in light coloured, loose fitting clothing and wearing a hat or cap
- Provide ample sunscreen for participants
- Utilise and/or provide shaded areas for both activities and respite
- Ensure trainers are fit enough to access as many players as possible during a game in order to monitor them for signs of heat stress
- Coordinate training times/activities/matches outside extreme conditions
- Shorten the duration of the game/training session
- In a match situation, increase the number of available interchange players

1.3 Postponement & Cancellation of Matches/Training Due to Extreme Heat:

On a game or training day when the forecast maximum ambient temperature at a given location is determined by the Bureau of Meteorology to be equal to or exceeding **35 Degrees Celsius**, there is an extreme risk of heat related injury to children and adolescents.

When matches or training sessions involving children and adolescents are scheduled to be conducted at times when the above conditions may prevail, those matches or training sessions should be **postponed to a more suitable time or cancelled**.

Coaches (and other club officials) should monitor conditions and let families know via regular communication channels if training or matches are due to be cancelled. Any discrepancy in decision making should be escalated to the committee.

2. Extreme Cold:

In conditions where extremely cold temperatures prevail, health risks exist for players not acclimatised to such conditions. It is advised that officials should note the following progressive signs of the onset of hypothermia:

- Shivering
- Cold sensation, goose bumps, confusion and numbness
- Intense shivering, lack of co-ordination and sluggishness
- Violent shivering, difficulty with speech, confusion, stumbling, depression
- Muscle stiffness, slurred speech and vision impairment

At the earliest signs of the above symptoms the player should:

- Be taken to a dry environment free from further exposure to the elements and warmed with blankets or extra dry clothing
- Substitute wet clothing for dry where practical
- Maintain the intake of fluids

When football matches or training sessions are scheduled to be conducted at times when extreme cold conditions may prevail, the following strategies should be considered:

- Allow alterations to uniforms to provide more warmth for players
- Shorten length of quarters or training session
- Choose alternate training venues/facilities not exposed to the weather conditions
- Cancel the match or training session if weather conditions are deemed to be too extreme

3. Lightning:

In the event of lightning being present in the immediate proximity of the venue during the course of a match or training session, play/training shall be stopped and all involved parties are to return to the clubrooms or pavilion.

3.1 Lightning Safety Guidelines:

In the absence of specific information from weather radar or a specialised warning device then the **30/30 Safety Guideline** should be used. According to the **30/30 Safety Guideline**, when lightning is considered to be a possible or actual threat the following procedures are applicable:

- The observation of approaching storm clouds, the first flash of lightning or clap of thunder, no matter how far away should heighten lightning awareness. The level of risk depends on one's location (direction and distance) relative to the storm cell and the direction in which the storm system is travelling.
- A simple method of determining the distance to the storm cell is to measure the time elapsed from when the lightning flash is observed and when the associated clap of thunder is heard. If it takes less than 30 seconds to hear thunder after seeing the flash, lightning is near enough to pose a threat (most experts agree that the accepted "safe" distance from lightning is greater than 10km).

- If this is the case, then the play/training should be ceased and shelter indoors (or in metal framed cars) should be sought. Players/officials should not shelter under or near trees or bodies of water.
- The second part of the **30/30 Safety Guideline** provides the criteria for the resumption of activity. It is recommended that a minimum of 30 minutes should elapse after the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder before play/training is resumed. Waiting 30 minutes allows the storm to be about 20km away, minimising the likelihood of a nearby lightning strike.
- It is important to emphasise that blue skies and lack of rainfall are not adequate reasons to breach the 30 minute minimum return-to-activity rule.

4. Other Extreme Weather or Environmental Conditions:

In the case of any other events of extreme weather or environmental conditions, including but not limited to extremely strong winds, flood, extreme fire danger, or fires being present in the vicinity of the training session/game, the coach should take appropriate action to ensure the safest outcomes for all involved.

5. Responsibility of Parents:

In any case of extreme weather or environmental factors, parents also have a responsibility to ensure the safety and well being of their child. Accordingly, the following general guidelines should be adopted by parents:

- Ensure your child has adequate fluid intake prior to game and during games (500-700mls per quarter) and training by educating them about the importance of fluid intake, especially in warm/hot conditions
- Notify coaching and/or training staff if your child appears to be suffering from the effects of extreme heat or cold.
- Have your child undertake pre-game, game and post-game cooling strategies.
- Do not allow your child to participate in the heat if they are suffering from any illness.
- Apply sun protection factor 30+ (minimum) sunscreen in high UV conditions.

Effective Date and Review

This policy is effective from March 2025 and is to be reviewed every 3 years unless a significant event or legislation is passed that warrants a sooner review.