



EXTREME WEATHER GUIDELINES

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CONTENTS



1. EXTREME WEATHER GUIDELINES	5
2. EXTREME HEAT – FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION	7
2.1. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	7
2.2. HOST (PERSONAL) FACTORS	9
2.3. OTHER SUGGESTED CONSIDERATIONS	10

INTRODUCTION

The Extreme Weather Guidelines for Touch Football contains general advice only and does not take into account individual objectives, situations, finances or specific requirements. Before acting on this advice, assess whether it is appropriate to your specific situations.

While all care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, no responsibility is accepted by Touch Football Australia for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies. This publication is of a general nature only and should be referred to in conjunction with related policies and information. It is not intended to be relied upon, nor as a substitute for, professional advice. No responsibility can or will be accepted by Touch Football Australia for loss occasioned to any person doing anything as a result of any material in this publication or any person relying on any material in this publication.

IMPORTANT

The following points should be borne in mind at all times:

1. Touch Football Australia is the national sporting organisation and all affiliated clubs/associations are insured under the National Insurance Scheme.
2. It is essential that you comply with all relevant laws, by-laws and regulations. You and your affiliate must take all due and reasonable precautions to prevent or mitigate losses. **Failure to do so may prejudice your rights and entitlements under our insurance policy.** Please do not hesitate to contact Touch Football Australia should any assistance be required.
3. The preparation of this document is in no way a commitment from Touch Football Australia to provide funds or make any other contribution now or in the future.
4. Touch Football Australia policies and procedures are living documents which reflect progress in administrative requirements and industry standards. As such, to maintain currency, policy and procedures are periodically reviewed and updated. It is important readers ensure they are reading and using the most up to date version. To confirm the current version, please contact Touch Football Australia at www.touchfootball.com.au.
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1. EXTREME WEATHER GUIDELINES

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS REGULARLY AFFECT THE PLAYING OF TOUCH FOOTBALL. WHILE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS WILL NOT USUALLY INFLUENCE WHETHER A TOUCH FOOTBALL GAME SHOULD COMMENCE OR CONTINUE TO BE PLAYED, OCCASSIONALLY EXTREMELY ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS MAY GIVE RISE TO A NEED TO ASSESS WHETHER PLAYERS AND/OR OFFICIALS ARE IN ENVIRONMENTAL DANGER.

Touch Football is (usually) an outdoor sport and participants will be dealing with natural elements. Touch Football Australia (TFA) strives to ensure that its members participate in the game of Touch Football in the safest environment possible and with minimum risk of harm. Committee Members, Administrators, Event and Competition Managers and Volunteers need to pay close attention to the weather forecasts on game day.

WET WEATHER AND STORMS

Touch Football games should not go ahead in the case of heavy rain, hail, lightening or thunderstorms and reference should be made to the following Extreme Weather Guidelines to determine whether a game should be postponed or suspended. In the case of wet weather, always adhere to advice from local council or other state/ regulatory body who manages the operation of the playing fields and has the authority to close the fields.

HOT WEATHER

It is expected that participants, staff and volunteers take care when competing in high temperatures. Competition staff should constantly remind players, officials and spectators about keeping hydrated before, during and after matches. Also, sun exposure presents risk of sunburn and skin cancer, and needs to be managed with shaded areas, sunscreen and hats/ clothes. Youth and the aged are particularly exposed to risks associated with sun exposure and hot weather.

These guidelines set out the approach that the Touch Football affiliate should follow when assessing extreme weather conditions. They are not binding, but affiliates must act responsibly. A common sense approach is encouraged and consideration of the comfort and well-being of all individuals including participants and officials should be taken.

Please refer to the Extreme Weather Guidelines on the following page.

Extreme Weather Guidelines

Identify Hazard	Action Required
a) Heavy Rain	Play/ Competition should be suspended until hazard clears. If it continues to rain heavily during that time, it is recommended that play/ competition be suspended until further notice.
b) Lightning/ Thunderstorm(s)	<p>When lightning is considered to be a possible or actual threat to a Touch Football game the following procedures are applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Observe the approaching storm clouds, the first flash of lightning or clap of thunder, no matter how far away should heighten lightning awareness. b) Method of determining the distance to the storm cell is to measure time elapsed from when lightning flash is observed and when the associated thunder is heard. The distance can be determined by using the following rule: Distance (Km) = time from observing flash to hearing thunder (in 3 seconds) <p>In the absence of specific information from weather radar, a lightning location system, or specialised warning device then the 30/30 Safety Guideline should be used. The 30/30 Rule is a guide to postponement or suspension of play/competition. The accepted “safe” distance from lightning is greater than 10km. This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) That as the time interval between observing the flash and hearing the thunder approaches 30 seconds, all those in exposed areas should be seeking or already inside safe shelters. A storm cell with lightning within 10km constitutes a threat b) For resumption of play/competition, it is recommended that people wait a minimum 30 minutes after the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder.
c) Hail/ Ice on ground	Play/ Competition should be suspended immediately until hazard clears. Refer to weather radar for official report and where available, shelter should be offered for players/ spectators/ officials until cleared.
d) Extreme Heat	<p>36 degrees + Play/ Competition should be postponed or cancelled.</p> <p>31 – 35 degrees Play/ Competition should be interrupted at 10 minute intervals for a minimum period of 2-5 minutes during which time rest, drinks/ cooling techniques & facilities should be used by all officials and players involved. Each session shall not exceed 60 minutes.</p> <p>30 degrees Communication of heat stress management strategies/ Warnings of possible risk.</p>
e) Extreme Cold Weather	When severe winter weather is forecast, weather reports and traffic conditions within the immediate area should be monitored, if the ground is slippery from frost, snow, rain or mud, or if the temp drops below 8 degrees, it is at the discretion of the controlling body to determine whether play/ competition should be suspended or cancelled until hazard clears.
f) Limited Air Quality/ Pollution	Communication of health management strategies/ Warnings for Asthma sufferers

2. EXTREME HEAT – FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

THERE ARE MANY FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN ASSOCIATIONS AND CLUBS ARE CONTEMPLATING MODIFYING, POSTPONING OR CANCELLING TOUCH FOOTBALL COMPETITIONS, EVENTS OR ACTIVITIES.

See below a list of factors; **Environmental** and **Host (Personal)** to consider before modifying or cancelling a Touch Football activity. Remember to not only take players into account but also referees, officials and volunteers.

2.1. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

TEMPERATURE (PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT)

Ambient temperature is the most easily understood guide available. Please refer to the below Temperature Matrix. The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) produces ambient readings for many locations within Australia. You can check these readings and a guide for the relative risk of your location at www.bom.gov.au/products/IDS65004.shtml.

However it is important also to note relative humidity levels in combination with ambient temperatures. When combining these two temperatures you will be better to gauge risk of thermal injury, as outlined in the below table.

Ambient temperature	Relative humidity	Risk of thermal injury	Possible modifying action for vigorous sustained activity
15 - 20		Low	Heat illness can occur in distance running. Caution over-motivation.
21 - 25	< 60%	Low - moderate	Increase vigilance. Caution over-motivation.
26 - 30	< 50%	Moderate	Moderate early pre-season training intensity. Reduce intensity and duration of play/training. Take more breaks.
31 - 35	< 30%	High - very high	Limit intensity. Limit duration to less than 60 minutes per session.
36 and above	< 25%	Extreme	Consider postponement to a cooler part of the day or cancellation.

DURATION AND INTENSITY

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.

Factors to consider include:

- The length of the game (30 minutes or greater)
- The number of Player and Referee rotations (Minimal – Unlimited)
- Competition grade/level (Social/ A Grade/ Representative/ Elite)

CONDUCT OF (HYDRATION & INTERCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES)

It is important to note that (5) five minutes of rest can cause a significant reduction in core temperatures. Therefore consideration towards the following factors include:

- dividing games into shorter playing periods to allow for extra breaks
- suitable hydration methods available (drink containers/ ice/ fans)
- alternative training/playing times
- alternative venues

TIME OF DAY

The hottest part of the day is usually between 11am – 3pm. Scheduling activities outside this time should be considered throughout any summer competition/ training/ event or activity.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

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

Factors to consider include:

- Type of playing surface (Synthetic grass/ Cement or Hardcourt/ Lawn)
- Location (Sheltered/ Open)
- Air movement (Enclosed/ Open)

Note: The more the venue is open to air movement, this will help decrease heat stress.

2.2. HOST (PERSONAL) FACTORS

CLOTHING

The type of clothing worn by players, referees, officials and volunteers is vital in minimising health risks associated with exercise in hot conditions. Therefore consideration towards the following factors include:

- Fabrics that minimise heat storage and enhance sweat evaporation
- Light weight, light coloured, loose fitting
- Made of natural fibres or composite fabrics with high wicking (absorption) properties that provide for adequate ventilation

Note: The clothing should complement the existing practices in Australia that protect the skin against permanent damage from the sun.

ACCLIMATISATION OF THE PARTICIPANT

This is the process in which an individual adjusts to a gradual change in its environment such as change in temperature and humidity. Allowing the individual to maintain performance across a range of environmental conditions. Consideration towards the following factors should include the following, especially if the athlete/team has travelled from cool temperature climate to compete in hot/humid conditions:

- Origin of participant/team
- Distance travelled
- Suitable period of preparation and acclimatisation under relative conditions (60 minutes activity per day for 7-10 days)

FITNESS LEVELS/ ATHLETIC ABILITY

The potential for heat-related illnesses can be exacerbated if the following conditions haven't been considered:

- Physical/ Physiological characteristics of the athlete including body size and endurance fitness (overweight/unconditioned)
- Lack of hydration
- Level of athletic ability playing in grade of competition

AGE AND GENDER

The age and gender of a participant can effect the level of risk towards heat exhaustion. Females may suffer more during exercise in the heat because of their greater percentage of body fat. Young children are especially at risk due to the poor development of essential body mechanisms that help the adult body to naturally cool itself. Veteran participants may also cope less well with exercise in the heat due to reduced cardiac function.

PREDISPOSED MEDICAL CONDITIONS

It is important to know if participants, referees, officials or volunteers have a pre-existing medical condition or are taking medication that may predispose them to heat illness. The following conditions are examples of illnesses that will put the participant, referee, official or volunteer at a high risk of illness:

- Asthma

- Diabities
- Pregnancy
- Heart Conditions
- Epilepsy
- Virus, Flu or Gastro

There are always preventative measures that can be undertaken to minimise heat injuries or illness. Whether it be the provision of shade, hats, appropriate sunscreen, spray bottles, water supply, nutrient supplements and more.

It is important to have trained personnel available to manage heat injuries and designated recovery areas for patients. When situations such as heat illness arise, an experienced medical practitioner should be present as heat stroke is potentially life threatening. Any indication of this condition should be immediately referred to an experienced medical practitioner for medical assessment.

2.3. OTHER SUGGESTED CONSIDERATIONS

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Touch Football Australia suggests that reference to the Extreme Weather Guidelines is made within your relevant Conditions of Entry for all competitions and events in order to clearly outline the processes required before, during and after a hazard presents.

Within your Conditions of Entry, you should then clearly outline what the process will be once the hazard clears and game/session recommences. As well as clearly define the principles and rules in relation to competition points, eligibility and draw structure, ensuring that fair and equitable opportunity is afforded to all teams.

WARNINGS/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

To inform and communicate this sudden change of conditions to your participants at the venue, clear warnings/ announcements should be communicated. For examples of warning/announcement scripts which a Ground Controller can use in the event of a hazard occurring these should be outlined in the Affiliate/ Competition Risk Management Plan.

Evacuation Message:

See below an example evacuation message.

“Ladies and Gentleman,

The Management have requested that although you are in no immediate danger, for your safety we have to stop the game(s)/performance temporarily and evacuate the stadium/facility.

Please remain calm and move in the direction indicated by the nearest exist signs”.



“The safety, comfort and well-being of all individuals involved in Touch Football is vital.”