**HOT WEATHER POLICY TEMPLATE FOR STATE SPORT ASSOCIATIONS**

**The following Heat Policy is provided as a template only.**

Content provided throughout this document is a guide to demonstrate what your organisation may consider appropriate for inclusion in its Heat Policy. Your organisation should also consider the information, documents and strategies required for your sport as relevant to your circumstances.

Vicsport reminds organisations that the information contained within this document is general in nature and should not be considered as a substitute for medical or legal advice.

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*This resource is supported by the Victorian Government (Sport and Recreation Victoria).*

*Vicsport developed this resource utilising and adapting content from the Australian Centre for Research into Injury in Sport and its Prevention (ACRISP), document and content analysis of heat policies and guidelines in Victorian community sport (2017).*

**Using this template**

Black text – content that can be edited as required for your context.  
Red text – content that should be edited for your context  
(Red text in brackets) – you need to insert relevant information  
*Red text in italics* – instructions for template user

**(INSERT ORGANISATION NAME)**

**HEAT POLICY**

**REVIEW DATE: (INSERT DATE)**

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# DEFINITIONS

**EHI** – Exertional Heat Illness

**BoM** –Bureau of Meteorology

**HHA** – Heat Health Alert

**Participant** –includes athletes, officials, coaches, parents, volunteers, staff, sports trainers and spectators.

**RISK** – is the chance, high or low, that a **hazard** will cause somebody harm

**UV** –Ultraviolet

**WBGT** –Wet Bulb Globe Temperature

# RELATED DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Vicsport *Hot Weather Guidelines for Sport and Active Recreation*, plus other (organisation) policies and procedures, including but not limited to: [delete/add as applicable for your Organisation]

* UV Protection Policy;
* Extreme Weather Policy;
* Risk Management Policy;
* Constitution;
* Codes of behaviour;
* Child Safety Policy;
* Member Protection Policy;
* Grievance and Discipline procedures;

# INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines (insert organisation)’s approach to protecting the safety of participants during hot weather. Warm to hot weather creates a risk that participants may experience a form of exertional heat illness, such as muscle cramps, fainting, heat exhaustion and even heat stroke.

The aim of (organisation)'s Heat Policy (the Policy) is to:

* Protect the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who participates, including volunteers, families, coaches and officials.
* Detail strategies for participation to continue with appropriate mitigation and risk management strategies in place.
* Provide guidance to event, competition and training organisers regarding the effective management of hot and extreme weather conditions.

Should a person wish to make any enquiries in relation to this Policy, please contact the (Organisation Name, contact person and contact details).

# POLICY STATEMENT

(organisation) is committed to ensuring our sport is accessible to everyone and we take every opportunity to provide the highest level of service to all members and participants. (organisation) has a duty of care to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of participants, during warm to very hot weather and heatwaves.

When there is a risk of exertional heat illness, (organisation) commits to acting in the best interest of all participants by implementing mitigation strategies. (organisation) listens to and respects the views of everyone involved in the sport, including children, family members and volunteers.

(Organisation) administrators, including committee members at affiliated clubs and associations, must closely and regularly monitor weather forecasts and comply with this policy when conducting or managing any events, training or competitions.

# SCOPE

This policy applies a range of people, safety risks and activities. All affiliated clubs and associations must comply with this policy.

**People**

This policy applies to all people involved in sport of (insert sport name) in both a formal and casual basis, including board members, staff, volunteers, committee members, officials, coaches, volunteers, participants, families, spectators and contractors.

**Safety Risks**

This policy is designed to reduce the risks and prevalence of injury and illness which can occur during physical activity. This includes the following:

* Exertional Heat Illnesses: muscle cramps, heat syncope (fainting), heat exhaustion and heat stroke. These can occur during warm to hot weather.
* *Add more if the policy covers other types of extreme weather (such as physical injuries due to storms).*

**Activities**

This policy applies to the following activities where (organisation) and our affiliated clubs and associations have a duty of care to participants:

*Customise for your sport…*

* State championships
* Weekly competitions and finals
* Training
* Regional championships
* Camps
* Come n try activities
* Social/modified sport products

# RECOGNISING EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

A person may, during the course of participating in the sport or other activities of (Organisation) develop signs and symptoms of exertional heat illness.

Exertional heat illness can be life threatening, therefore, if a person is concerned about an immediate risk to an individual’s health and safety, the person must phone **“000”** (or alternatively **“112”** from a mobile when you are out of your service provider's coverage area) as soon as practicable.

**Exertional heat illnesses** can be categorised from mild to severe.

**Muscle cramps**

Symptoms include abdominal, arm or leg muscle pains or spasms. This may be a result from the loss of salt and water due to heat and exertion.

First aid treatment may include:

* Stop sport or activity.
* Rest in a cool environment.
* Hydrate.
* Rest before continuing to be active in sport or activity.
* Seek medical help if there is no improvement.

**Heat syncope (fainting)**

Symptoms include dizziness, fainting, headache and vomiting. This is a result a sudden drop in blood pressure as blood flows away from the major organs to the extremities (skin) to try and cool down.

First aid treatment may include:

* Stop sport or activity.
* Rest in a cool environment.
* Hydrate.
* Rest before continuing to be active in sport or activity.
* Seek medical help if there is no improvement.

**Heat exhaustion**

Symptoms include profuse sweating, weakness, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, muscle cramps, rapid weak pulse and extreme thirst. It occurs when excessive sweating reduces the blood volume due to a loss of salt and water due to heat and exertion.

First aid treatment may include:

* Stop sport or activity.
* Lay person down in a cool environment.
* Cool body (remove outer clothing or wet clothes, mist skin with cool water, fan/aircon).
* Hydrate.
* Seek medical advice (If needed call triple zero **“000”** or **“112”** from a mobile).
* Prepare to give CPR if necessary.

**Please note*:*** This is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke.

**Heat stroke**

**This is a medical emergency and requires urgent attention.** Symptoms include red, hot and dry skin (no sweating), rapid pulse, confusion, irrational behaviour, seizures, and unconsciousness. Heatstroke occurs when the core body temperature rises above 40°C and the body’s internal systems start to shut down. Many organs in the body suffer damage and the body temperature must be reduced quickly.

First aid treatment may include:

* Call triple zero “**000**” for an ambulance (or “**112”** from a mobile).
* Lay person down in a cool environment.
* **Do not** give the person fluids to drink.
* Cool body (remove outer clothing or wet clothes, mist skin with cool water, fan/aircon).
* Place ice packs \*(wrapped in towel) under armpits and groin;
* **Stop cooling** if person starts shivering.
* **Position an unconscious person on their side and clear their airway**.
* Prepare to give CPR if necessary.

# RISK FACTORS FOR EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

(Organisation) recognises that multiple factors pose a risk to the health and safety of participants, including the environment, factors specific to individuals and factors specific to our sport.

**Environmental Risk Factors**

Climate related environmental risk factors can increase the risk of illness and injury. Risk factors include:

* Air temperature.
* Humidity (it becomes more difficult to regulate body temperature in higher humidity due to a decrease in sweat evaporation).
* Wind speed (this affects the rate of water evaporation).
* Radiant temperature (such as radiant heat from ground surface).

**Individual Risk Factors**

The following individual risk factors are relevant our participants These factors need to be understood by everyone involved in our sport, especially coaches, officials and first aid providers.

a) Age

Children and adults over 65 are considered at greater risk of heat illnesses.

b) Poor physical condition

Some people may experience an exertional heat illness at lower temperatures due to exercising beyond current capacity.

c) Inadequate acclimatisation

This can take place when the body is not conditioned to warm and/or humid climates.

d) Illness or medical conditions

Individuals may be more affected by heat due to medications and illness.

e) Dehydration and electrolyte imbalances

Good hydration is needed to keep the body’s core temperature down during sport or hot conditions. People must rehydrate to compensate for what the body loses in sweat.

f) High intensity of exercise

Causes the body to sweat more and increases the risk of heat illness.

**Extrinsic / Sport Risk Factors**

Extrinsic risk factors are specific characteristics of the sport activity which can contribute to an increased risk of exertional heat illness. The following risk factors are relevant to (insert sport). Many of these risk factors can be adjusted to reduce some of the risk of exertional heat illness.

a) Excessive clothing and athletic gear

Types of clothing that is worn when participating in sport and recreation, is generally chosen to suit the needs of that sport the activity. It may be to increase performance or provide protection from injury. It is important to recognise that some sporting gear may contribute to exertional heat illness during warm to hot conditions.

*Insert what is relevant for your sport (for example, helmets, head gear, shoulder pads, chest plates, gloves).*

b) Lack of awareness and education of exertional heat illness

If participants are not aware of the signs and symptoms of exertional heat illness this can pose an increased risk to their health as they may not undertake appropriate preparation steps. (Organisation) will take steps to educate all participants about the meaning and risks of exertional heat illness.

c) Venue and location

Different surfaces radiate various levels of heat. In addition, indoor venues can either increase or decrease the risk of exertional heat illnesses depending on the structure, air flow and availability of air conditioning.

The following playing surfaces are ranked from coolest to hottest in radiant heat emission:

* Water
* Natural grass
* Boards
* Sand
* Synthetic turf
* Asphalt

*Please insert what surfaces will apply to your sport and the level of risk identified.*

d) Level and duration of activities

More vigorous physical activity increases the body’s core temperature, posing a greater risk of exertional heat illnesses. Activities that continue without regular breaks can also pose an increased risk to participants.

*Insert information about activities common to your sport that may pose a risk due to the level of intensity and duration.*

e) Time of play

During hot weather the warmest parts of the day should be avoided. Times of day ranked from most risk to least risk are:

1. 11 am – 3pm

2. 3pm – sunset

3. 9am – 11 am

4. Evening (after sunset)

5. Early morning (before 9am)

*Detail what this means for your sport, noting any relevant risks if activities usually take place during higher risk times.*

# MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The risks of exertional heat illness being suffered by participants can be reduced through a range of mitigation strategies. These strategies can be implemented by everyone. In particular, individuals with a duty of care to participants should consider appropriate mitigation strategies during warm to very hot weather conditions.

(Organisation) will implement the following sport modification parameters if there is a risk of exertional heat illness to participants.

*Add or delete the following of what is applicable for your organisation. This section must be adequately customised for the policy to be relevant to your organisation. You should also detail who is responsible for the implementation of each strategy.*

**Hydration**

* Promoting hydration strategies including drinking to thirst before, during and after physical activity and reducing intake of sugar sweetened beverages, coffee and alcohol.

**Water and cooling**

* Encouraging participants to bring additional drinking water
* Increasing availability and access to water for drinking and where appropriate, mist sprays (detail will be responsible to provide water and the quantities to be provided by the organisation)
* Encourage participants to bring ice slurry drinks and cold towels

**Shade**

* Increasing the amount of shade available (by providing portable shelters, encouraging participants, clubs, and teams or families to bring portable shelters)
* Increasing frequency of breaks for participants to take refuge in shaded areas

**Rescheduling**

* Changing the time of the event to a cooler part of the day
* Postponing to future dates
* Moving to an alternative venue
* Cancelling planned events, competitions or activities

**Rule changes**

* Reducing length of games, races or activities
* Mandating player rotations
* Mandating rest and drink breaks
* Allowing for appropriate clothing or uniform modifications where required
* Reducing or removing individual or team penalties if they elect not to participate.

**Additional breaks**

* Increase break times
* Increase break frequency

**Shorter duration of play or training time**

* Shortening the event to reduce the exposure
* Shortening participant exposure to high risk conditions by increasing rotations or substitutions in games or decreasing workload in training
* Excluding high intensity activities such as longer training runs

**Individuals**

* Promote individual risk reduction strategies such as hydration
* Avoid participants (including volunteers or officials) waiting for long periods in full sun
* Giving parents the option to remove children from activities, or not attend at all, if they believe it is too hot
* Promote a culture where participants are encouraged to speak up if they feel unwell

**Incidents**

* Ensure professional first aid responders, or qualified first aid personnel, are always on site when people are physically active during hot weather
* Monitor players closely and recognise signs and symptoms of exertional heat illness
* Present a range of strategies for internal cooling of a participant such as cold fluids and ice-slurry drinks
* Present a range of strategies for externally cooling a participant such as cold-water immersion, cooling garments, cold wet towels, and fanning

# ACTIVATING THIS POLICY

This heat policy must be referred to if it is determined by (Organisation) that there is a risk of exertional heat illnesses during immediate or upcoming matches, games, training sessions, activities, competitions or events.

Requirements for (organisation) and affiliated clubs and associations to determine heat risk levels include:

* Assessing the risk of any upcoming matches, games, training sessions, activities, competitions or events.
* Obtaining local weather forecast before and on the day of matches, games, training sessions, activities, competitions and events.

This policy is activated when:

* Forecast temperature is above 21C.
* A Heat Heath Alert is issued for the relative region of Victoria in which the event will take place.
* A total fire ban has been declared.
* Other heat related environmental threats have been identified (such as bushfires).

While the policy is activated when the forecast temperature is above 21C, modifications are more likely to place in much higher temperatures. To assess the potential mitigation strategies to put into action, individuals with authority or responsibility can use the following as a guide.

(Organisation) and all affiliated clubs and associations will promptly communicate any potential or actual changes and mitigation strategies if there is a risk of exertional heat illness to participants.

**Assessment of weather conditions**

**Before the event day**

Climate forecasts are available up to seven days before an event. People with responsibility and authority of participants should monitor forecast ambient temperatures so that appropriate plans and communications can take place.

(Organisation) use the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) as the source of climactic information. All staff and volunteers should ensure they have access to:

* The BoM Weather smartphone app http://www.bom.gov.au/app/. This provides information on ambient temperature and Apparent Temperature (AT) which includes air temperature and humidity and appears on smartphone app as e.g. ‘feels like 20.1C’.
* The BoM website: Forecast Summary of Victorian Towns <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/towns.shtml>

If climate conditions (like heatwaves) are likely to pose an increased risk to people’s health, the Department of Health and Human Services will issue a Heat Health Alert (HHA). All event managers should subscribe to the Heat Health Alert (HHA) system and be notified of current heat health alerts in Victoria. <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heat-health-alert-status>.

**On the day**

To support objective decision making, (organisation) should track climate conditions on the day because:

* Conditions, including relative humidity and apparent temperature can be higher than the forecast ambient temperatures.
* The risks associated with climatic conditions may vary based on the location of the event.

Two options can be used to monitor climate conditions on the event day.

1. The preferred method is Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WGBT), a measure of the heat stress in direct sunlight, which considers temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle and cloud cover (solar radiation). A WGBT can be measured by:
   1. Using a WBGT meter at the event site.
   2. Tracking the WBGT rating at the closest BoM station from this list: <http://www.bom.gov.au/products/IDV65079.shtml>
2. Refer to the BoM smartphone app or website. This will provide Information on ambient temperature and Apparent Temperature which includes air temperature and humidity – this appears on smartphone app as ‘feels like \_\_C’.

*The inclusion of a framework must be relevant to the duration, location and level of intensity of your sport.*

*Consider use of Wet Bulb Globe Temperature or Apparent Temperature readings for more accurate, localised risk assessments.*

*The following table is provided as a guide only. The temperature and humidity levels are based on the Sports Medicine Australia ‘Beat The Heat’ Fact Sheet, (*[*https://sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2017/08/beat-the-heat-2011.pdf*](https://sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2017/08/beat-the-heat-2011.pdf)*) . Please note that the risks of exertional heat illness will increase where relative humidity is above the what the table indicates.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forecast or current ambient temperature** | **Actions for consideration** *– adjust to suit the needs of your sport or recreation activities.* |
| 21C-25C  Humidity exceeds 70% | * Be aware of risks to individuals in higher risk categories. * Promote hydration strategies * Ensure participants have easy access to shade |
| 26C-30C  Humidity exceeds 60% | * Be aware of risks to individuals in higher risk categories * Promote hydration strategies * Ensure participants have easy access to shade * Consider less intense and shorter duration activities * Monitor humidity levels for increases in ‘feels like’ temperature above ambient temperature |
| 31C-35C  Humidity exceeds 50% | * Be aware of risks to individuals in higher risk categories * Actively monitor the health and well-being of all participants * Ensure qualified first aid personnel are on-site * Be cautious of over exertion during training * Promote hydration strategies and provide additional water * Be prepared to apply internal and external cooling strategies if individuals present with symptoms of exertional heat illness * Ensure participants have easy access to shade * Consider less intense and shorter duration activities * Consider postponing to cooler parts of the day * Monitor humidity levels for increases in ‘feels like’ temperature above ambient temperature * Consider cancellations, especially where competition results are less important |
| >36C  Humidity exceeds 30%  Heat Health Alert issued for relevant area | * **Consider postponing or cancelling the sport or recreation activity, especially if humidity exceeds 30%** * Actively monitor the health and well-being of all participants * Ensure qualified first aid personnel are on-site * Be cautious of over exertion during training * Promote hydration strategies and provide additional water * Be prepared to apply internal and external cooling strategies if individuals present with symptoms of exertional heat illness * Ensure participants have easy access to shade * Consider less intense and shorter duration activities * Consider postponing to cooler parts of the day * If activities are set to continue, promote strategies individuals can use to reduce their risk * Strongly encourage anyone to speak up if they feel unwell * Monitor weather conditions throughout the day * Call “000” immediately if any participant is suspected of having heat stroke or is not responding to heat exhaustion treatment |

**Making decisions**

*In this section, detail who is responsible for implementing mitigation strategies at various times during your sport. Consider all scenarios where people are physically active:*

* *Club competitions – is the responsibility of the league or association, match officials/referees, players or coaches to implement mitigation strategies?*
* *Regional or state championships – is the responsibility of the technical directors, referees, or your CEO?*
* *Training – is it the responsibility of the coach to mitigate risks? What responsibility is placed on the players?*
* *Come n try events or modified sport – is it the responsibility of the coach, staff members or others to mitigate risks?*
* *Add other scenarios and customise for the specific needs of your sport.*

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF (ORGANISATION) PERSONNEL

Personnel involved in protecting participants from exertional heat illness include the board, management, staff and volunteers within the Organisation. Those people have responsibilities in relation to protection of all members and are expected to:

* Understand the risks of exertional heat illness, as appropriate to their role.
* Understand and appropriately respond to the needs of participants who are more vulnerable to exertional heat illness.
* Appropriately act on any concerns raised by participants about exertional heat illness.
* Understand the definitions, indicators and impact of exertional heat illness.
* Know and follow guidelines in relation to the care of all members during warm to very hot weather, and at times of extended periods of exceptionally high day and night-time temperatures (heatwaves).
* Not jeopardise the health and safety of members who access (Organisation)'s services.

# POLICY PROMOTION

This policy will be made available to all members via (insert how the policy will be made available. i.e. website, email).

This policy will be communicated to all staff, Board, and Committee members via (insert how the policy will be made available. i.e. internal memo, email, meetings).

References to this policy will be included in documentation provided to all team officials that represent (Organisation).

# REVIEW PROCESS

This policy will be reviewed by the (Organisation) Board on a (insert frequency i.e. annual, biennial) basis.

If you would like to provide (Organisation) with any feedback or suggestions to improve this policy, please contact (insert organisation name and contact details).

In addition to the regular review of this policy, recommendations for changes to the policy may be submitted to the Board for consideration at any time. In the event that changes are accepted, the policy will be updated, and circulated to all stakeholders via the webpage, bulletin and other appropriate communication channels.

**END OF TEMPLATE**

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**References**

Australian Centre for Research into Injury in Sport and its Prevention (ACRISP), 2017. *Document and content analysis of heat policies and guidelines in Victorian community sport.* Federation University Australia: Ballarat.

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