**HOT WEATHER POLICY TEMPLATE FOR SPORT CLUBS, LEAGUES AND 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 CLUB NAME)**

**HEAT POLICY**

**REVIEW DATE: (INSERT DATE)**

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# INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines (insert club name)’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 (insert club name)'s Heat 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.

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

# POLICY STATEMENT

(insert club name) 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. (insert club name) 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, (insert club name) commits to acting in the best interest of all participants by implementing mitigation strategies.

# SCOPE

This policy applies to all people involved in our organisation, including committee members, volunteers, coaches, officials, participants, parents and guardians. It covers all activities in which people are physically active. It covers situations where people are inactive yet situated in hot, sunny conditions, such as volunteers, parents, spectators and coaches.

This policy is designed to reduce the risks and prevalence of injury and illness which can occur when people play sport during warm to very hot weather conditions.

# RECOGNISING EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

Exertional heat illness can be categorised from mild to severe, including muscle cramps, heat syncope (fainting), heat exhaustion, heat injury and heat stroke (life threatening).

Associated signs and symptoms can include:

* Headache.
* Light-headedness and dizziness.
* Nausea and vomiting.
* Fatigue.
* Change in personality (disorientation, confusion, irrational behaviour, irritability).
* Change in performance (unsteadiness, loss of balance and coordination, loss of skills).
* Seizures.
* Loss of consciousness.
* Cardiac arrest.

People to whom this policy applies need to be aware that exertional heat illness can occur whenever there are actual or potential environmental, individual and organisational risk factors, and it is in these circumstances that (insert club name) is committed to reducing the risk of occurrence.

**NOTE:** 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 **“112”** from a mobile when you are out of your service provider's coverage area) as soon as practicable.

# RISK FACTORS FOR EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

(insert club name) 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 at (insert club name).

* **Age**: Children and adults over 65 are considered at greater risk.
* **Poor physical condition**: Some people may experience heat illness at lower temperatures due to exercising beyond current capacity.
* **Inadequate acclimatization**: This occurs when our body is not conditioned to warm and/or humid climates.
* **Illness or medical conditions**: Individuals may be more affected by heat due to medications and illness.
* **Dehydration and electrolyte imbalances**: Good hydration is needed to keep your body’s core temperature down during sport or hot conditions. You must rehydrate to compensate for what the body loses in sweat.

**Sport Risk Factors**

Sport 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.

*Detail which risks are relevant to your club (i.e. playing netball at 2pm on asphalt in full sun might be considered risky in hot conditions and require modifications, such as more breaks or rescheduling).*

Risk factors include:

* **Excessive clothing and athletic gear** can increase the risks of the body’s core temperature rising.
* **Lack of awareness and education of exertional heat illness**
* **Venue and location.** Surfaces such as asphalt and synthetic turf radiate more heat than water or natural grass. Indoor venues with low air flow or without air conditioning can also present a risk.
* **Level and duration of activities.** The longer the activity and the more intense, the higher the risk.
* **Time of play.** Risks are highest between 11am and sunset.

# 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.

(insert club name) 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 (such as the club committee, coaches, or officials).*

**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 / timing changes**

* Changing the time of the event to a cooler part of the day
* Postponing to future dates
* Increasing frequency and length of breaks
* Shorten duration of games or races
* Exclude higher intensity activities (sprints, long distance)

**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.

**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

# ACTIVATING THIS POLICY

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

Climate forecasts are available up to seven days before an event. We will monitor forecast ambient temperatures so that appropriate plans and communications can take place.

(Organisation) uses the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) as the source of climactic information. All committee members, coaches and officials 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.<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heat-health-alert-status>.

At least two club emails will be registered to receive Heat Health Alert notifications.

*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 club, based on section 6.* |
| 21C-25CHumidity exceeds 70% | * Promote hydration strategies
* Ensure participants have easy access to shade
 |
| 26C-30CHumidity exceeds 60% | * Promote hydration strategies
* Ensure participants have easy access to shade
* Consider less intense and shorter duration activities
 |
| 31C-35CHumidity exceeds 50% | * Actively monitor the health and well-being of all participants
* Be cautious of over exertion during training
* Promote hydration strategies and provide additional water
* Ensure participants have easy access to shade
* Consider less intense and shorter duration activities
* Consider postponing to cooler parts of the day
 |
| >36C Humidity exceeds 30%Heat Health Alert issued for relevant area | * **Consider postponing or cancelling the sport or recreation activity.**
* If continuing, implement relevant mitigation strategies.
* Actively monitor the health and well-being of all participants
* Be cautious of over exertion during training
* Promote hydration strategies and provide additional water
* Ensure participants have easy access to shade
* Consider less intense and shorter duration activities
* Consider postponing to cooler parts of the day
 |

**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 – insert who is responsible for decisions.*
* *Training – insert who is responsible for making decisions.*
* *Add more as required.*

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF (INSERT CLUB NAME) PERSONNEL

Personnel involved in protecting participants from exertional heat illness include the committee members, parents and volunteers. 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.
* Appropriately act on any concerns raised by participants about 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).
* Promptly communicate changes through to participates through the most commonly used communication channels at the club (*such as email, Facebook, apps or other*).

#  POLICY PROMOTION

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

#  REVIEW PROCESS

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

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

**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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Better Health Channel, 2015. *Heat stress and heat-related illness.* Retrieved from <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/heat-stress-and-heat-related-illness>

Sports Medicine Australia, 2011, *Beat The Heat Fact Sheet*, <https://sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2017/08/beat-the-heat-2011.pdf>