Hot Weather Guidelines for Sport

**POLICY TEMPLATE FOR SMALL CLUBS / ASSOCIATIONS**

**The following heat policy is provided as a template only.**

This document is designed for sport organisations to develop a policy template to promote the safety of all participants during hot weather. It should be read in conjunction with the *Hot Weather Guidelines for Sport & Active Recreation* which is published on the Vicsport website. The topics included in this sample policy are essential for inclusion, but you should also think about what additional topics you could include in your own policy that are relevant to your club. You may also want to add more detail to each topic where you think is desirable or necessary.

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

**Further Information:**

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

*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).*

***[Insert club name]***

**Heat Policy**

**Endorsed on:** *[insert date the policy was endorsed by club committee]*

**Date for Review:** *[insert date of next review]*

**Purpose**

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the management, staff and volunteers of the *[insert name of club]* to provide a safe environment for participants, officials, coaches, parents, volunteers and spectators. It provides guidance and direction to ensure administrators, volunteers, coaches and officials know how to reduce the risks of heat illnesses during club activities. This includes having measures in place to address heat risks during all forms or participation, including *[insert all relevant activities such as matches, games, training sessions, activities, competitions].* This policy includes:

* Our commitment to heat safety
* Who this policy applies to
* When the policy is activated
* Identifying exertional heat illness
* Risk factors and mitigation strategies
* Assessing risk and communicating changes
* Reviewing the policy

**Commitment to Heat Safety**

*[insert name of club]* is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our members, particularly during warm to very hot weather, and at times of extended periods of exceptionally high day and night time temperatures (heatwaves). *[insert name of club]* commits to acting in the best interest of its members by implementing mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of heat related illness. The welfare of all individuals in our care will always be our first priority and *[insert name of club]* has a zero tolerance to putting its members at risk of any heat related illness during sport. This includes extremes in weather and temperature when sport or physical activity should not be undertaken, particularly by at risk or more vulnerable population groups.

**Application of this Policy**

This policy was developed by *[insert name of club]* and in collaboration with *[adapt as appropriate]* *staff, volunteers and the participants who use our services].*

This policy applies to all individuals involved in our organisation (paid and volunteer) including, but not limited to:

* Administrators
* Coaches
* Officials
* Participants
* Parents
* Visitors
* Spectators

All of the people to which this policy applies have a role and responsibility in relation to heat protection. They must all:

* Understand the indicators and risks of exertional heat illness.
* Appropriately act on any concerns raised by participants.
* Understand and follow all guidelines in relation to the protection of individuals and reporting or management of heat safety concerns.

**Activation**

This heat policy must be referred to if it is determined by *[insert name of club]* that there is a risk of heat related illness during immediate or upcoming matches, games, training sessions, activities, competitions and events. This decision on whether to modify activities, re-schedule, or provide additional mitigation measures like shade or water may be made by different people within the club depending on the activity.

*[insert activity type i.e. weekly training or weekend match]*

*[insert who makes decisions regarding heat i.e. coach, match official, parents]*

Sporting activities that are covered by this policy include all individual and team:

* Sporting events
* Games or matches
* Practice matches practice games
* Social sport
* Training.
* *Add more if relevant or delete items*

Requirements for our club 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 match, game, training sessions or activities by:
  + - * + Adopting and using the Emergency Management Victoria app <http://emergency.vic.gov.au/prepare/#extreme%20heat>
        + Have a minimum of two (2) official club or club member emails subscribed at all times to the Heat Health Alert (HHA) system to be notified of current heat health alerts <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heat-health-alert-status>
        + Checking the weather with the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) smartphone app or website:
  + BoM Weather app

<http://www.bom.gov.au/app/>

* + 7-day forecasts including maximum and minimum temperatures <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/map7day.shtml>
  + Heatwave Forecast <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/index.shtml>
  + Forecast Summary of Victorian Towns <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/towns.shtml>
  + Wet Bulb Globe Temperature <http://www.bom.gov.au/products/IDV65079.shtml>

**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 name of club]* 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.

**Addressing heat risk**

Heat safety is a shared responsibility and *[insert name of club]* encourages members to express their views about their health and safety. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all members who use our services to ‘have a say’ about things that are important to them.

We will endeavour to educate our members about what they can do if they feel that they are at risk of any heat related illness and we listen to and act on any concerns they raise with us.

*[Insert any details of specific ways the organisation does this here]*

**Risk Management and Mitigation**

We recognise the importance of using a risk management approach to minimise the potential for exertional heat illness or harm occurring and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of exertional heat illness to our participants. To reduce the risk of exertional heat illness occurring, individuals to whom this policy applies should consider all risk factors when applying mitigation strategies. For example, in the event of modification or cancellation of matches, games and training sessions or other activities *[insert name of club]* should consider:

* Environmental risk factors.
* Individual risk factors.
* Sport specific risk factors.

**Environmental risk factors**

Our club will ensure that climatic conditions are considered when determining whether heat illness prevention strategies are required. This includes the evaluation of weather conditions through the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) smartphone app or website.

**Individual risk factors**

Our club is inclusive and encourages all participants to participate in sport and we give consideration to the following risk factors:

* **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.
* **High intensity of exercise**: Causes the body to sweat more and increases the body’s core temperature.

**Sport specific risk factors**

Our club is inclusive and encourages all participants to participate in sport and we give consideration to the following risk factors:

**Excessive clothing and athletic gear.** *Please insert what may be applicable at your club (e.g. helmet, head gear, shoulder pads, chest plate, gloves).*

**Playing surfaces.** Different surfaces radiate various levels of heat. The following playing surfaces are ranked from coolest to hottest in heat emission*.**Please insert what surfaces will apply to your sport.*

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

**Venue and location** *Please insert what may be applicable (e.g. whether the venue is outdoor or indoor, the air flow, shade provisions, cooling capabilities of buildings).*

**Level of play** *Please insert what may be applicable (e.g. low intensity, moderate intensity [some effort], vigorous intensity [huff and puff]).*

**Time of play.** The risk is higher at times closer to the afternoon. *Please insert what may be applicable.*

**Duration of play.** Risk is higher if play continues without rest breaks. *Please insert what may be applicable.*

**Prevention strategies to minimise risk factors**

Our club encourages and promotes heat illness prevention strategies including *(insert the following examples which apply to your sport)*

* ***Rescheduling*** *(add mitigation strategies for your sport).*
* ***Rule changes*** *(add mitigation strategies for your sport).*
* ***Additional breaks*** *(add mitigation strategies for your sport).*
* ***Shorter duration of play*** *(add mitigation strategies for your sport).*
* ***Heat acclimatisation*** *of participants to playing conditions;*
* ***Hydration*** *before, during and after sport including providing access to water;*
* ***Cooling*** *of individuals during warm to hot conditions;*
* *Providing or encouraging the use of* ***shade and shelter****;*
* *Monitoring players closely and* ***recognising signs/symptoms*** *of heat illness;*
* ***Providing and promoting sun protection****, encourage/allow players to wear hats, sunglasses, long-sleeves, sunscreen;*
* *Allowing appropriate* ***clothing/uniform modifications*** *when required; and*
* *Providing* ***education*** *around heat illness for participants.*
* *Providing* ***first aid*** *responders during events.*

**Assessment and communication of changes**

Our club will communicate to our members any potential or actual changes/cancellations, mitigation strategies or individual risk factors that have been established by:

**1 week before the event, competition or activity**

* Identify level of risk and need for further monitoring.
* If zero risk is established – no action required outside of regular pre-event communication.
* If some risk is established – communicate the following:
  + Heat has been identified as a threat to safety, we are monitoring the weather, strategies can be deployed if necessary.
  + Further updates will be communicated before the event.

**3 days before**

* Assess forecast temperature.
* Identify level of risk and need for further monitoring.
* If zero risk is established – no action required outside of regular pre-event communication.
* If some risk is established – communicate the following:
  + What strategies will be used (i.e. extra shade and water).
  + Fact sheets about how individuals can reduce risks (i.e. stay hydrated).
  + Further updates will be communicated before the event.
  + If cancelling, communicate message to all participants and stakeholders.

**On the day**

* Identify level of risk and need for further monitoring.
  + Final decision on event modification or cancellation (if needed).
  + Communicate the following:
    - What strategies will be used (from policy section 12.3 or other).
    - Fact sheets about how individuals can reduce their own level of risk (i.e. stay hydrated).

**After the event, competition or activity**

* Communicate success of mitigation strategies (measured by number of heat illnesses through first aid treatment).
* Communicate any learnings or future mitigation strategies.
* Ask for feedback about mitigation strategies.

**Reviewing this policy**

This policy will be reviewed by *[insert name of club]* every *[insert frequency i.e. annual, biennial]* and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers involved in *[insert name of club]*.

**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.

Australian Red Cross, 2017. *Heatstroke and heat exhaustion.* Retrieved from <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/looking-after-yourself/heatstroke-and-heat-exhaustion>

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>