

## Athletics NSW Weather Policy

Athletics NSW recognises inclement weather and other emergencies can affect the organisation's ability to provide a safe competition environment. The safety of our athletes, officials and volunteers is paramount in all weather conditions. These guidelines are not binding, but Athletics NSW reminds all parties that they should act responsibly.

Athletics NSW also always encourages everyone involved in the sport to be conscious of their own personal health and safety.

The following guidelines shall apply to all Athletics NSW competitions:

### 1.0 Extreme Heat

#### 1.1 Heat Related Illness

Heat illness in sport presents as **heat exhaustion** or the more severe **heat stroke**.

##### Heat exhaustion

- Characterised by a high heart rate, dizziness, headache, loss of endurance/skill/confusion and nausea.
- The skin may still be cool/sweating, but there will be signs of developing vasoconstriction (eg, pale colour).
- The rectal temperature may be up to 40°C and the athlete may collapse on stopping activity. Rectal temperature should only be measured by a medical practitioner or nurse.

To avoid heat exhaustion, if people feel unwell during exercise they should immediately cease activity and rest. Further benefit comes if the rest is in a shaded area with some passing breeze (from a fan if necessary) and the person takes extra hydration. Misting or spraying with water can also help.

##### Heat stroke

- Characteristics are similar to heat exhaustion but with a dry skin, confusion, and collapse.
- Heat stroke may arise in an athlete who has not been identified as suffering from heat exhaustion and has persisted in further activity.
- Core temperature measured in the rectum is the only reliable diagnosis of a collapsed athlete to determine heat stroke.
- Heat stroke is similar to other cerebrovascular strokes and presents with similar physiological signs and symptoms.

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This is a potentially fatal condition and must be treated immediately. It should be assumed that any collapsed athlete is at danger of heat stroke. The best first aid measures are “**Strip/Soak/Fan**”:

- strip off any excess clothing;
- soak with water;
- fan;
- ice placed in groin and armpits is also helpful.

DO NOT immerse the person entirely in a cold-water bath. *This could cause cardiac arrest and circulatory shutdown.*

The aim is to reduce body temperature as quickly as possible. The athlete should immediately be referred for treatment by a medical professional.

Important: heat exhaustion/stroke can still occur even in the presence of good hydration.

### **Dehydration**

Dehydration is fluid loss which occurs during exercise, mainly due to perspiration and respiration. It makes an athlete more susceptible to fatigue and muscle cramps. Inadequate fluid replacement before, during and after exercise will lead to excessive dehydration and may lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

To avoid dehydration, Athletics NSW recommends that:

- athletes drink approximately 500 mls (2 glasses) in the 2 hours prior to exercise;
- during exercise longer than 60 minutes, 2-3 cups (500-700ml) of cool water or sports drink are sufficient for most sports.
- after exercise replenish your fluid deficit to ensure full hydration but not over-hydration.

## **1.2 Recommended Guidelines and Actions for Competition**

It is vital to realise that the effects of heat results from a combination of temperature AND humidity. A low temperature day would have a higher impact if the humidity levels were high.

It should be noted when making decisions that the thermoregulation of children pre-puberty is not as well developed as adult males and females. Decisions made on children’s events need to take this physiological difference into account.

Similarly, adults above the age of 80 have decreased thermoregulatory functionality. Again, decisions on the whether an event proceeds should be based on the age of the athletes involved as well as temperature and humidity.

***The guidelines for the cancellation or postponement of a meet are therefore based on a combination of temperature and humidity.*** Recommended guidelines for both parameters are summarised below:

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## Temperature

### *Temperature 30 degrees Celsius or less:*

- Athletes, officials and volunteers should exercise caution, particularly in out of stadia and track endurance events
- Athletes, officials and volunteers should remain hydrated during the competition by drinking often.
- Modifications to the timetable or individual events are not required, however where possible, distance events should be held in the coolest part of the day.

### *Temperature 31 - 36 degrees Celsius*

- Athletes, officials and volunteers should exercise caution particularly in out of stadia and track endurance events or those that are require officials and/or volunteers to remain in direct sunlight for an extended period of time.
- Shelter must be provided for all athletes, officials and volunteers who are not shaded.
- Athletes should carefully consider the number of events they compete in over the course of the competition.
- Athletics NSW will provide access to drinking water for athletes, officials and volunteers.
- All officials and volunteers will be provided with a minimum 15 minute break per 90 minutes in a cool shaded area.
- If possible, a reserve field team to be appointed providing a rotation of extended breaks for field event officials.
- Events should be scheduled for the coolest part of the day where possible.
- Modifications to the timetable or individual events may be considered by the Competition Manager.

### *Temperature 37 - 40 degrees Celsius*

- Athletes, officials and volunteers should exercise extreme caution.
- Shelter must be provided for all athletes, officials and volunteers who are not shaded.
- Athletics NSW will provide access to drinking water for all athletes, officials and volunteers.
- Athletics NSW will provide ice packs to officials and volunteers on the field of play as required.
- All officials and volunteers will be provided with a minimum 25 minute break per 90 minutes in a cool shaded area.
- If possible, a reserve field team to be appointed providing a rotation of extended breaks for field event officials.
- Competition schedule and timetable may be modified with respect to the time of day and length of the event.
- Out of stadia and track endurance events may be cancelled or postponed to later in the evening.

### *Temperature 40 degrees and above*

- All competition will be postponed until the temperature falls below the 40 degrees Celsius.

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## Important Additional Considerations

### Heat Index:

The *heat index*, also known as the apparent temperature, is what the temperature feels like to the human body when relative humidity is combined with the air temperature. **The maximum heat index for Athletics NSW competitions shall be 40 degrees Celsius (40°C).** The below table outlines the relative humidity percentage per temperature level at which all competition is to be postponed eg at 31°C and a relative humidity percentage of 78% the heat index exceeds 40°C.

### Heat Index @ 40degrees Celsius

Temperature - C	Relative Humidity %	Temperature - C	Relative Humidity %
31	78	36.4	41
32	69	36.5	40
33	62	36.6	40
33.1	61	36.7	39
33.2	60	36.8	38
33.3	60	36.9	38
33.4	59	37	37
33.5	58	37.1	37
33.6	58	37.2	36
33.7	57	37.3	36
33.8	56	37.4	35
33.9	56	37.5	35
34	55	37.6	34
34.1	54	37.7	34
34.2	54	37.8	33
34.3	53	37.9	33
34.4	52	38	32
34.5	52	38.1	32
34.6	51	38.2	31
34.7	51	38.3	31
34.8	50	38.4	30
34.9	49	38.5	30
35	49	38.6	29
35.1	48	38.7	29
35.2	48	38.8	28
35.3	47	38.9	28
35.4	46	39	27
35.5	46	39.1	27
35.6	45	39.2	26
35.7	45	39.3	26
35.8	44	39.4	25
35.9	43	39.5	25
36	43	39.6	24
36.1	42	39.7	24
36.2	42	39.8	23
36.3	41	39.9	23

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### *Type and duration of the event:*

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; eg, distance running is more of a problem than stop-start sprint events.

### *Fitness levels/athletic ability of participant*

- A number of physical/physiological characteristics of the athlete will influence the capacity to tolerate exercise in the heat, including body size and endurance fitness.
- In endurance events, accomplished but non-elite runners, striving to exceed their performance, may suffer from heat stress. The potential for heat-related illnesses would be exacerbated if they have not acclimatised to the conditions and have failed to hydrate correctly.
- Overweight and unconditioned athletes, umpires, officials, and volunteers will also be susceptible to heat stress.

### *Age and gender of participant*

- Female participants may suffer more during exercise in the heat because of their greater percentage of body fat.
- Young children are especially at risk in the heat. Prior to puberty, the sweating mechanism, essential for effective cooling, is poorly developed. Their thermoregulation is not as efficient as an adult. The ratio between weight and surface area in the child is also such that the body absorbs heat rapidly in hot conditions.
- Veteran participants may also cope less well with exercise in the heat. Reduced cardiac function is thought to be responsible for this effect.

### *Predisposed medical conditions*

- It is important to know if athletes, umpires, officials, or volunteers have a medical condition or are taking medication that may predispose them to heat illness.
- Examples of illnesses that will put the participant or official at an elevated risk of heat illness include asthma, diabetes, pregnancy, heart conditions and epilepsy. Some medications and conditions may need special allowances.
- Participants and officials who present with an illness such as a virus, cold, flu, gastrointestinal disturbance, or who are feeling unwell are at an extreme risk of heat illness if exercising in moderate to hot weather.
- Participants or officials who may be affected by drugs or alcohol may be at an extreme risk of heat illness if exercising in moderate to hot weather.

## **Discretionary Cancellation**

- Athletics NSW reserves the right to cancel a competition if they deem that the predicted environmental conditions present a serious health risk to athletes, officials and or volunteers.
- Air quality will be taken into consideration when a discretionary decision is made to cancel a competition.

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### 1.3 Requirements of Competition Manager

- The Competition Manager (or delegate) must have an implement to accurately measure temperature and humidity at all meets conducted by Athletics NSW.
- Temperature and humidity must be measured trackside and not in direct sunlight
- Monitor every 60 minutes
- Ice and drinking water must be available onsite
- Ensure enough first aid staff are on site
- Ensure all officials and volunteers are briefed in sun smart procedures (hat, sunscreen, sun glasses, hydration, long sleeve breathable clothing) prior to taking to the arena
- Ensure announcements are made throughout the day reminding athletes of the sun smart procedures. (e.g. signs in competition areas, call room, post event, check-in etc.)

### 1.4 Removal of Distressed Athletes from Events

Athletes who are clearly in distress may be removed from the track or field of play by the following officials:

- Medical Delegate/Officer
- Track Referee
- Field Referee

## 2.0 Lightning

### 2.1 Recommended Guidelines & Actions for Competition

#### 30/30 Lightning Rule

- As a thunder storm develops, the seconds between the flash of lightning and the bang of the thunder will be counted
- *If the flash to bang period of time is less than 30 seconds, **all people** will be instructed to leave the field of play.*
- Activities will not resume until 30 minutes after the last audible thunder bang

### 2.2 Lightning Safety

- Avoid isolated trees or other tall objects, it is better to seek shelter under a thick growth of relatively small trees
- Stay away from water - steeple water jump, rain
- Avoid any metal objects - javelins, throwing cage, high jump, pole vault uprights, tent poles
- Spread out and do not stay in a group
- Never lie flat of the ground
- As a last resort, assume the lightning-safe position – if you feel your hair stand on end, your skin tingle or you hear cracking noises, crouch on the ground with your weight on the balls of your feet, your feet together, your head lowered, and your ears covered.

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## 2.3 Requirements of Competition Manager

- Must check and monitor the forecast, keeping an eye on the skies
- Ensure all personnel seek shelter when required.
- Ensure all officials and volunteers are aware of lightning safety, should they get caught in the storm.
- Ensure all activities do not re-commence until the storm has cleared.

## 3.0 Decision Making Process

The decision to cancel, suspend or modify events will be the responsibility of the Competition Manager (or delegate) in consultation with *at least two of the following*:

- Technical Delegate
- Competition Director
- Meeting Manager
- Track or Field Referee
- Athletics NSW CEO or delegate
- Medical Delegate/Officer

Requests and information from interested parties may be considered but those interested parties will NOT be involved in the decision making process – which is designed to be speedily and efficiently made and immediately acted upon.

**Peter Higgins**  
Chairman  
Athletics NSW

**Duncan Tweed**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Athletics NSW

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