



INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Softball Victoria has formulated this policy to minimise the risk of injury, illness and possible death to members of the Softball community in Victoria, by assisting administrators, officials, coaches and participants to recognise and manage potentially dangerous situations.

The following recommendations shall apply at all events held under the auspice of Softball Victoria. Softball Victoria strongly recommends affiliated associations and their member clubs adopt this policy for implementation within their own competitions and activities.

A.HOT WEATHER

For normally healthy active people the only dangers from heat illness are likely to arise from high intensity exercise such as endurance running. Sports such as softball and cricket are usually safe at higher temperatures because of the lower intensity of the play over shorter periods of time.

Because sports heat stress is complex and because individual responses to heat stress vary, it is not possible to cover overall conditions. A number of physical/physiological characteristics of the individual will influence the capacity to tolerate exercise in the heat, including age, body size, medical conditions and endurance fitness.

HOT WEATHER for PARTICIPANTS, including players, coaches, umpires, administrators, volunteers.

1. Timing of Games

Where possible games and softball activities involving moderate to high intensity exercise should be scheduled to avoid hot conditions.

In Victoria participants are likely to be exposed to their highest risk of thermal injury in the months when summer competition is scheduled although in some regions this level of risk extends into autumn.

- 1.1 Sports Medicine Australia recommends that the scheduling of games, where possible, be avoided in the hours between 12noon and 4pm (EDST) during the summer months.

2. Conduct of Competition and Training

There are many factors to be considered when contemplating modifying, postponing or cancelling events. Consideration should be given to the following :-

- 2.1 alternative training times and venues
- 2.2 providing opportunities for participants to interchange or substitute
- 2.3 reduction of participation time and or extension of rest periods
- 2.4 provide water, additional than for drinking, to allow participants to spray/douse themselves and or their clothing

2.5 in situations where the temperature is moderate to high risk, drink breaks shall be enforced every fifteen (15) minutes should any fielding inning extend past a fifteen (15) minute duration.

2.6 allowing participants to rest between games in naturally shaded areas or under portable structures that create shade

3. Hydration

The more a participant sweats, the more fluid she/he must consume to avoid dehydration. High levels of dehydration may increase the risk of heat stress. To diminish the risk of heat stress fluid should be consumed before, during and after activity.

3.1 It is recommended participants drink approximately 500 ml in the two (2) hours prior to playing or training to promote adequate hydration and allow time for excretion of excess water.

3.2 During competition games, training or strenuous activities it is recommended that participants drink fluid at regular intervals to replace water lost through sweating. Participants should aim to drink at least 150ml every fifteen (15) minutes, however this may vary dependent on the rate of sweating. Fluid taken should be cooler than the air temperature.

3.3 Care should be taken not to over hydrate. Drinking too much fluid can lead to the dangerous condition of low blood sodium. Participants should aim to drink enough to replace lost fluids but not more than that.

3.4 Water is considered an adequate fluid option for activities lasting up to one hour. Participants competing in games, events or training activities exceeding one hour are recommended to use carbohydrate based sports drinks as a means of replacing fluids, carbohydrates and electrolytes lost during prolonged activity. These drinks include commercially available sports drinks.

3.5 Cool water or other recommended fluids should be made available for consumption during breaks in games and training sessions. Participants should be encouraged to drink fluids during breaks between innings and should be provided convenient access to cool fluids during breaks of play without unnecessary interruption to the game or event.

3.6 Participants are encouraged to use personal drink bottles for use at games and training sessions.

4. Shade and Sun Protection

Adequate shade is necessary for players whilst not actively participating in the game. This is to assist with recovery and to provide adequate protection from the sun.

Sunscreen is also an important element of sun protection, particularly given softball's clothing culture of short sleeves, shorts and peaked caps. Sunscreen should be applied before, and at recommended, regular intervals throughout the game.

4.1 Shaded areas should be provided for participants whilst not actively participating in a game or activity

4.2 Sunscreen (SPF30+) should be made available for use by all players

5. Personal factors

Clothing, where possible, should be light coloured, loose fitting clothes, of natural fibres or composite fabrics with high absorption properties that provide for adequate ventilation are recommended.

- 5.1 Protective Clothing, eg chest plates, helmets, should be removed immediately at the conclusion of each inning or game.

6. HOT WEATHER for JUNIOR PARTICIPANTS Under 16 years of age

The following clauses are additional to Clauses 1-5 which are applicable to ALL participants including junior participants.

- 6.1 The physiological and structural difference between children and adults places children at a greater risk of suffering from heat illness. These differences impact on a child's ability to respond to environmental heat and acclimatise to heat. These differences include a larger surface area/body mass ratio, which affects their ability to dissipate heat when environmental temperature is greater than skin temperature. This can be an advantage when heat loss is necessary, but is a disadvantage when radiant or convective heat gain occurs.

- 6.2 At air temperature greater than or equal to 36° Celsius there is extreme risk of thermal injury to all children and adolescents participants.

6.3 Postponement or Cancellation of Games

- i) The postponement or cancellation of softball related activities and or games held under the auspice of Softball Victoria shall be determined by the event Disputes Committee or Softball Victoria's representative in attendance. The temperature shall be taken into consideration but shall not be the sole deciding factor.

- ii) Softball related activities and or games, conducted by Regions and or Affiliated Associations, should be postponed or cancelled when they are scheduled to commence at times when the ambient temperature is above 36° Celsius.

The temperature should be measured, with a standard thermometer, on the pitcher's plate, ten (10) minutes prior to the scheduled time to commence. The game should not commence unless the measured temperature is 36 degrees Celsius or less. Once a game commences it shall be completed according to the rules of the relevant competition.

6.4 Juniors (Participants under the age of 16 years) Participating in any Competition/Softball Activity above Under 16 Level

Juniors who participate in any Competition/Softball Activity above Under 16 Level should be the subject of special support and scrutiny by administrators and coaches. If these games/activities are played in temperatures over 36 degrees Celsius administrators and coaches should ensure an appropriate targeted strategy for heat exposure and hydration is adopted specifically for these junior participants. This strategy should be additional to that in place for the older participants.

6.5 Timing of Games for Juniors

The greatest likelihood of players encountering conditions where the air temperature is above 36 degrees Celsius is between the hours of 11am and 3pm. For planning purposes and to minimise the likelihood of game cancellation it is recommended games be scheduled to commence outside the hottest part (12noon and 4pm (EDST)) of the day.

6.6 Hydration for Juniors

For children and adolescents having trouble drinking adequate tap water, flavoured drinks such as commercially available sports drinks may need to be considered. (Drinks high in sugar such as soft drinks and caffeine based drinks such as coffee or cola should be avoided). Conversely, the high energy content of some flavoured drinks may be unnecessary during exercise in players who are have a genuine rather than an aesthetic need to lower body fat levels.

It is recommended that young players begin regular drinking routines using water during training and competition. Regular and effective drinking practices should become habitual to young players before, during, and after games and training sessions.

B.COLD WEATHER

1. Factors that Increase Injury due to the COLD

Inadequate clothing and insulating from the cold , particularly if wet, High wind chill factor, Leanness, Fatigue, Smoking, Poor Nutrition, Age (very young, old), Poor circulation, Arterial disease, Tight clothing or shoes

2. Prepare for the worst possible weather conditions

Warm up prior to exercise and warm down and rug up following exercise

3. Hydration

Replace fluid loss, ideally with warm sweet fluids

4. Prevention of Hypothermia

4.1 wear appropriate clothing, dress in layers so that clothing may be adjusted for over cooling over heating perspiration and external moisture.

4.2 when cold is felt put on a hat as 65% heat loss is through the head

4.3 where dry windproof well insulated clothing that allows water vapour ie sweat to escape

4.4 stay dry - clothing saturated with sweat or rain loses it's insulating properties

4.5 ensure adequate sealing of clothing around wrists, ankles and the neck where body movement may force cold air beneath clothing

C. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Ambient Temperature (air) is the most easily understood guide available and is most useful on hot dry days. A standard thermometer is used to read the temperature.

Further guidance will be gained from use of Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) index.

WBGT is not the same as air temperature as the WBGT accounts for the levels of humidity, radiation, wind movement and air temperature. Measuring WBGT is done using a Wet Bulb Globe Thermometer.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) produces AMBIENT & WBGT readings for many locations. You can check these readings and a guide for the relative risk for your location at

www.bom.gov.au/products/IDV65079.shtml or by clicking the 'Local Hot Weather Alerts' button at www.sma.org.au

D. OTHER FACTORS

In situations where heat or cold problems may be expected:-

Trained medical personnel should be present during training sessions and games.

A designated recovery area for those affected by heat or cold should be available

E. ENFORCEMENT of this POLICY

- i) At all softball related activities and or games held under the auspice of Softball Victoria this policy shall be implemented by members of the event Disputes Committee or Softball Victoria's representative in attendance.
- ii) At all softball related activities and or games, conducted by Regions and or Affiliated Associations this policy shall be implemented by members of the relevant Executive committee in attendance.

For further information on heat and cold during sport refer to Australian Sports Medicine's Guidelines.

www.sma.org.au

Adopted in principal May 2009 pending approval of ASM