



Extreme Weather Guidelines

**Little Athletics Activities -
Member Associations and Centres**

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Version: 1.0

OVERVIEW

This Guideline aims to provide Little Athletics Member Associations (MA) & Centres, a set of strategies to provide a safe environment regarding weather events, and to reduce the likelihood of illness or injuries occurring because of extreme weather.

It covers weather events such as heat, wind, rain, lightning and air quality or other unusual or unpredictable weather conditions, that might occur at any Sanctioned Little Athletics Activity, including, but not limited to:

- State / Region / Zone Carnivals / Championships
- Centre Competition and Training Sessions.
- Sanctioned Activities – Camps, Clinics
- Sanctioned Educational Events – Courses, Workshops

The postponement, cancellation, or continuation of an activity, will be determined by the **Event Team** which could consists of:

- MA Chief Executive Officer / Region / Zone / Centre President
- MA Technical Delegate or equivalent
- MA Competition Director / Manager / Region / Centre Competition Manager
- Event Director / Manager / Supervisor

The Event Team structure should be determined prior to the activity occurring, during the planning phase.

Little Athletics Competitions

To ensure the Competition Director / Manager, has accurate information on any changing weather conditions on the track and at the event sites, the following senior Officials, who are responsible for ensuring the Rules of the competition are applied, along with the conduct of all Officials, will provide constant updates on conditions that could impact the ability to provide a safe environment for all participants.

- Meet Managers
- Referees
- Other Senior Officials in charge of Centre Competitions

They report directly to the Competition Director / Manager.

Little Athletics Activities / Events / Training Sessions

The person responsible for supervision and conduct of the activity, must remain vigilant and has accurate information with constant updates on any changing weather conditions, that could impact the ability to provide a safe environment for all participants. They rely on other supervisors or facilitators to assist with providing these updates, who share the responsibility for participants safety.

PURPOSE

In extreme weather conditions, the Event Team may decide to modify the schedule of relevant disciplines to protect Athletes, Officials, Coaches, Spectators, and other Participants from exposure to the elements or physical stress.

The Event Team has the authority to direct the postponement or cancellation of such events, if conditions pose an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of any participant.

AIMS

- To protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of all who participate in the activities and events at any competition, training, or activation.
- To ensure that the Event venue is a safe place to participate, compete, spectate, officiate or coach, as far as is reasonably practicable; and
- Provide guidance to Event and Competition organisers regarding the effective management of extreme weather conditions.

STATEMENT

The Event Team will closely monitor weather forecasts and seek to comply with the following guidelines when conducting or managing extreme weather at any Sanctioned Little Athletics Activity.

GENERAL

The Event Team responsible for conducting and managing the Sanctioned Activity must be aware of weather forecasts and plan accordingly to minimise the risk of inclement weather affecting Athletes, Officials, Coaches, Spectators and other Participants.

All Officials, Coaches, Supervisors and Participants should be made aware of the chain of command for event management and control. It should be clear who has the authority to:

1. Suspend and subsequently resume the activity or event.
2. Cancel the activity or event.
3. Communicate with stakeholders regarding decisions made about the activity or event.

Where weather or other conditions threaten the immediate safety of the athletes, spectators, officials, coaches, supervisors, or any other persons on the competition or event / activity site, the person immediately responsible for that activity may suspend or postpone the event until such time that in his/her opinion the threat to safety is no longer evident.

HEAT

Heat-related injuries or illness pose a risk to athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, participants, and spectators at any Sanctioned Little Athletics Activity.

A heat illness in sport may present itself in a variety of forms including heat exhaustion and more severe heat stroke.

Heat stress risk is calculated using a combination of both the peak temperature during the specific time of the activity, with the accompanying relative humidity at the same specific time and location.

The management of extreme heat at a Sanctioned Little Athletics Activity is vital to the health, safety, and welfare of athletes and all participants.

Sport Medicine Australia (SMA) is the peak multidisciplinary body for sports medicine, sports science and physical activity in Australia. SMA has issued several versions of an Extreme Heat Policy, providing evidence-based guidance for protecting the health of those participating in sport and physical activity from potentially ill effects of extreme heat.

The current version, **Extreme Heat Risk And Response Guidelines and Webtool (2025)**, provides the latest information on assessing Heat stress risk, with a newly created Web based Tool.

The Heat and Health Research Centre at the University of Sydney have supported the creation of the guidelines, as well as developing and providing the Sports Heat Tool. A specific heat stress risk scale is displayed using a physiological model that provides a risk calculation for heat stress, including providing evidence-based cooling strategies.

SMA's **Extreme Heat Risk and Response Guidelines** and accompanying **Sports Heat Tool** provide clear evidence-based guidance to help everyone involved in sport make safe decisions when temperatures rise.

SMA's **Extreme Heat Risk and Response Guidelines** outlines practical strategies to reduce heat-related risk across more than 30 popular Australian sports, which includes Athletics. The guidelines are relevant to all Australians who are physically active, but they are particularly valuable for sports administrators and coaches, who promote physical activity.

They provide advice on:

- Using the Sports Heat Tool assess heat stress risk.
- Recommended actions for *Low*, *Moderate*, *High* and *Extreme* risk conditions
- Hydration, rest breaks and clothing modification
- Recognising and managing signs of heat-related illness

The **Sports Heat Tool** makes it easy to check heat-stress risk at your location in real time. It combines weather data automatically extracted from the nearest weather station, with sport-specific information to give a clear risk rating and suggested actions.

To use the tool:

- Select your **sport** and **location**
- View your **current heat-stress rating** (Low, Moderate, High or Extreme)
- Access **recommended safety actions** and **detailed cooling tips**
- Check **hourly and 7-day forecasts** to plan ahead

The Sports Heat Tool can be downloaded onto a mobile device for real time assessment at the activity, to allow the Event Team to make informed decisions.

Users of the Sports Heat Tool are provided with evidence-based heat stress risk reduction strategies tailored to the level of heat stress risk encountered.

To download the Sports Heat Tool – [Click Here](#)

<https://sma-heat-policy.sydney.edu.au/>

To download the SMA Extreme Heat Risk and Response Guidelines – [Click Here](#)

<https://sma.org.au/resources/policies-and-guidelines/hot-weather/>

Preparation

If hot weather is likely to occur, the Event Team, in conjunction with the Technical Manager / Competition Manager / Event Manager, will ensure that there is sufficient shade at all field events, marshallings and finish areas for Competitions and sufficient shade for other Activities.

Ensure that there are several water stations in and around the venue, and additional water provided to allow participants to wet their skin, face, neck and hair to assist the cooling process.

The Event Team will determine the continuation of the Sanctioned Activity in extreme heat.

HIGH WINDS

High winds have the potential to create dangerous conditions for athletes, spectators, officials, coaches and other participants. Where these winds create unreasonable risks within the Event area, activities may need to be suspended by the Event Team.

Hazards may include furniture or fixtures being disturbed, items being blown onto the field or track, or athletes, officials, coaches & spectators' health threatened by the force of the wind.

WET WEATHER

The postponement, cancellation, or continuation of a Sanctioned Activity due to rain will be at the discretion of the Event Team.

Participant safety will remain paramount when deciding to postpone/continue an activity in the rain, and environmental factors such as the track / venue surface, pooling of water, visibility etc. will be taken into consideration.

1. If it is raining heavily, and there are safety concerns, activities may be discontinued for a period and conditions reassessed to determine whether activities should continue.
2. If a hailstorm occurs during the event, all activities should be suspended, all participants should seek suitable protective cover.
3. The Event Team will be responsible for conducting and managing the activity, and will take the necessary steps to ensure that the track surface, field surface and surrounds are safe for use. The Event Team will inspect the site for each discipline to determine its suitability for use before any activities are resumed.

LIGHTNING

When thunderstorms threaten, the Event Team will assess the situation ensuring the safety of athletes, officials, coaches and spectators.

The Event Team in coordination with the Meet / Event Managers, Referees will ensure all athletes, officials, coaches and spectators where possible are inside a safe shelter during a thunderstorm.

Lightning Facts

- All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous.
- Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as fifteen kilometres from any rainfall.
- Any time thunder is heard, the thunderstorm is close enough to pose an immediate lightning threat to your location.
- When thunderstorms are in the area but not overhead, the lightning threat can still exist even when overhead it is sunny, not raining, or when clear sky is visible.
- Many lightning casualties occur before the thunderstorm rains have moved into the area. This is often due to people not seeking shelter soon enough.
- Large numbers of casualties occur after the rain dissipates. This can be due to people being in too much of a hurry to go back outside and resume activities.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Chain of Command

The Event Team has the authority to call for suspension and subsequent resumption of activities.

2. Weather Watcher

The Event Team will monitor the weather forecasts in the days leading up to the event and will also on the day look for signs of developing local thunderstorms such as high winds, darkening clouds and any lightning or thunder.

3. Providing Warnings

The Event Team in conjunction with the Meet / Event Managers, Referees will promote lightning safety to athletes, officials, coaches and spectators. A protocol will be put in place to warn all individuals at risk from a lightning strike.

The Event Team will ensure lightning safety messages are read out over the PA system if thunderstorms are forecast or are imminent which will include:

- Criteria for suspension and resumption of activities
- The location of safe shelters and the best way to access them.

4. Safe structures and locations

A list of safe structures and locations to evacuate to in the event of lightning will be determined by the Event Team.

Safe structures

- The primary choice for a safe structure is a large, fully enclosed building.
- If a building is not available, a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and the windows completely closed is a reasonable alternative.

Unsafe locations and situations

- An open field.
- Close vicinity to the tallest structure in the area (e.g. Tree/s, light pole, discus cage)
- Small structures such as rain/picnic shelters, tents, equipment sheds.
- Use of electrical appliances.
- Umbrellas or any object that increases a person's height.

5. Criteria for suspension and resumption of activities

The sound of thunder will serve as an immediate warning of lightning danger. If an individual can see lightning/or hear thunder they are already at risk.

A procedure for announcing the suspension and resumption of activities will be put in place by the Event Team prior to Sanctioned Activity.

The 30-30 rule

By the time the flash-to-bang count approaches 30 seconds, all individuals should already be inside a safe shelter.

- Wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound (thunder) or observation of lightning and ensure conditions are completely safe before leaving shelter to resume activities. Each time lightning is observed, or thunder is heard, the 30-minute clock should be re-started.
- A recommended saying is: "If you can see it, flee it; if you can hear it, clear it".
- Follow your set criteria for the suspension and resumption of activities without exception.

6. First Aid

Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge, are safe to handle, and need immediate medical attention. Cardiac arrest is the immediate cause of death in lightning fatalities. Some deaths can be prevented if the victim receives the proper first aid:

- Call 000 at once.
- Check the victim's pulse and breathing. Begin CPR if necessary.
- If possible, move the victim to a safe place. Be aware that the thunderstorm may still pose a threat.

AIR QUALITY

Smoke, airborne dust and air quality are by-products of several other extreme conditions and can create a possible risk for people with certain conditions i.e. asthma, heart conditions.

During exercise, respiratory rate and volume increases, which increases the total airway exposure to airborne pollutants.

The Air Quality Index – AQI is used to evaluate the current air quality and provide general advice on the health risk and implications for individuals.

The AQI uses the atmospheric PM(2.5) concentration to determine the exercise risk categories and exercise specific recommendations.

The following table provides an overview of the recommendations at each PM(2.5) level.

AQI – PM2.5 Level	RECOMMENDATION
0-50 Good	• Air quality is considered satisfactory; air pollution poses little or no risk. • Exercise is encouraged.
51-100 Moderate	• Air quality is acceptable, however there may be a moderate health concern for those sensitive to air pollution. • People with respiratory conditions such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exercise.
100-150 Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	• People who are sensitive to air pollution, should limit their exposure as much as practical. • Prolonged high intensity activities should be avoided. • Intermittent exercise / activities, represent less risk than prolonged activities. • However, risk remains above baseline, and susceptible people should have a current asthma management plan and medications accessible.
151-200 Unhealthy	• Everyone may begin to experience health effects; those more sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects. • All efforts should be made to reduce exposure as much as practical. • Events can be rescheduled.
201-300 Very Unhealthy	• Health warnings of emergency conditions. • Everyone is more likely to be affected. • Events should be rescheduled.
300+ Hazardous	• Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects. • No outdoor activities.

Each State and Territory provides real time information on Air Quality; these can be accessed by the following websites.

ACT:

<https://www.act.gov.au/health/topics/air-quality-and-pollen>

NSW:

<https://www.airquality.nsw.gov.au/air-quality-in-my-area/concentration-data>

VIC:

<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/airwatch/airwatch-table-data-page#tab-standard-monitoring-sites-2>

QLD:

<https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/air-quality/>

TAS:

<https://epa.tas.gov.au/environment/air/monitoring-air-pollution/monitoring-data/real-time-air-quality-data-for-tasmania/all-sites-table>

SA:

https://www.epa.sa.gov.au/environmental_info/air_quality/new-air-quality-monitoring

These should be checked by the Event Team and used with the Table above to determine the suitability and action to be taken when assessing the Air Quality on each day of the Sanctioned Activity.

The AQI should be monitored throughout the day if conditions deteriorate, the Event Team should then take the necessary steps to minimise all potential health risks.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Event Team

Ensure that procedures reflect current recommendations for reducing and managing risks associated with extreme weather conditions at a Sanctioned Activity.

Event / Meet Managers & Referees

Be aware of prevailing weather conditions and how that may affect athletes, officials, coaches, participants and spectators at the event, and apply the Extreme Weather Guidelines. Be in constant contact with the Event Team to provide updates on the conditions.

Officials / Supervisors / Facilitators

Be aware of prevailing weather conditions and how that may affect athletes, officials, coaches and spectators at the event, and apply the Extreme Weather Guidelines.

Athletes / Participants / Spectators

Be aware of prevailing weather conditions and of these Guidelines. Alert the officials, coaches or supervisors of any safety concerns. Follow the directions advised.

Appendix: Document History

Date	Version#	Purpose/Change
October 2025	1.0	Document created for Member Associations and Centres. Includes latest SMA Extreme Heat Guidelines & USYD Heat Assessment Tool. Adapted from LAA ALAC Extreme Weather Guidelines.