

ALL WEATHER POLICY – GUIDELINES FOR CENTRES/CLUBS



Overview

This Policy aims to provide the South Australian Little Athletics Association (SALAA) a set of strategies to provide a safe environment in regards to weather events, and to reduce the likelihood of illness or injuries occurring as a result of inclement weather. This Policy covers weather events such as heat, sunshine, cold, rain and lightning. Note: This policy may vary from Centre to Centre and should be adapted to suit local conditions and requirements.

The postponement, cancellation or continuation of a Centre/Club training, meet or competition will be at the discretion of the relevant Centre/Club committee members.

The following guideline acts as a recommendation to committee members, who may also need to take into consideration other factors such as local legislations/guidelines and circumstances on the day. SALAA does not intend to set a standard relating to delay or cancellation of centre/club activities, due to any weather condition, including temperature, as we acknowledge that this standard may differ between locations (e.g. rural areas versus metropolitan areas). This should be determined by committee members.

Heat

Heat-related injuries or illnesses pose a risk to athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators at competitions and trainings.

Heat illness can occur across all events and at temperature levels well below those considered to be a risk. Opportunities should be taken to educate athletes and parents/guardians about the importance of sun safety, avoiding dehydration and managing hot weather conditions. Such messages should be regularly reinforced.

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

Some common signs of heat illness that may be seen in Little Athletes are listed below in order of increasing seriousness/severity:

- Dizziness (light headedness).
- Complaining of being hot and appearing distressed.
- Appearing exhausted or weak (fatigued); needing help to stand.
- Stumbling, unsteady, clumsy, falling.
- Collapse - unable to stand; and usually accompanied by some degree of confusion / drowsiness.
- Collapse - altered consciousness ranging from confusion, drowsiness through to unconsciousness.

Note: Some of these signs are also seen in children who have pushed themselves and are distressed at the end of their event, but are not due to a heat illness.

Participants who show any signs of a heat illness should be stopped and removed from the activity immediately.

- Lay the person down to rest in a cool shaded area with some air circulation.
- Raise the legs and pelvis if possible.
- Remove excess clothing.

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- Cool the person by wetting, misting or spraying the skin with water and fanning vigorously.
- Apply ice packs to the neck, armpits and groin.
- Give them cool water if they are conscious.

If the person does not quickly recover and remains seriously ill, confused, vomiting or shows signs of altered consciousness call an ambulance immediately and seek medical help. Continue cooling the person.

Note: On advice from a first aid/medical officer to the appropriate committee member, an athlete may be removed from a training/event if they appear to be suffering from a heat illness.

Preparation

It is recommended that if hot weather is likely to occur that parents/guardians should ensure that athletes are sufficiently hydrated in the lead up to the activity and proactive measures are taken to cope with the anticipated conditions. These may include:

- Packing sufficient drinks and making them readily available.
- Taking iced or frozen drinks to the activity.
- Taking ice packs that can be held or massaged against the skin for a cooling effect.
- Packing towels and face washers that can be soaked with water during the day and draped around shoulders and necks.
- Taking personal spray bottles and/or battery-operated fans.
- Taking umbrellas and other shade structures in case there is not adequate shade at the venue.

Shade

Centre and Club Committee organisers must ensure that shade is provided at all field events, marshalling and finish areas. It should also be provided in other areas where participants, officials and volunteers could potentially be waiting for long periods of time unprotected from the sun.

In hot weather, where possible, athletes who have been marshalled should be kept in the shade as long as possible prior to their events, and returned to the shade if there are any unexpected delays. On hot days, parents/guardians should ensure that athletes stay out of the sun and rest as much as possible while not training/competing.

Drinks

Younger children (<11-13yrs) generally do not appreciate what feeling thirsty is. Older children (13- 17yrs) usually do appreciate thirst, but this may not result in an appropriate response on the day under the stress of competition.

Body fluids are lost through sweat, so young athletes should be encouraged to drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise. More fluids than normal will need to be consumed by participants in hot weather due to their increased sweating rate. Parents/guardians must take a major role in the monitoring of fluid intake, ensuring enough fluid intake and encouraging the child's involvement in managing the issue for themselves.

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Young athletes should be taught to drink BEFORE they get thirsty, rather than when they get thirsty but also need to take care not to overhydrate.

The aim should be to drink enough to replace lost fluids, but not more than that. Parents/guardians should ensure that athletes take adequate fluids out with them to an event.

Centre/Club committee members should ensure that:

- There is a number of water stations in and around the training/competition area. They should be at all field events, marshalling areas and the finish line.
- Additional water is provided so as to allow participants to wet their face, clothes and hair to assist the cooling process. E.g. spray bottles, buckets and sponges, etc.

Attire

All athletes should wear sun safe attire. Clothing should be light-coloured, light weight, loose fitting and well ventilated to allow easy evaporation of sweat from the skin. It should also provide adequate protection from the sun. Whilst exposed to the sun (except when training/competing) a well-ventilated broad brim hat should be worn.

All officials and volunteers must be seen to be setting a sun smart example. During activities, they are encouraged to wear collared shirts, hats and sunglasses.

Sunscreen

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child applies sufficient amounts of sunscreen to protect them whilst they are involved in a Little Athletics activity.

Sunscreen should also be provided and located at all Little Athletics training and competition events.

Public Announcements

It is recommended that during competition, public announcements be regularly made reminding those at the event to keep drinking water, apply sunscreen and remain in the shade wherever possible

Other

During hot weather the following individuals may be at increased risk of heat related illness, and appropriate precautions should be implemented, and their condition monitored on a frequent basis.

The group includes those that:

- Are not fit or who are overweight
- Are not used to hot weather or had sufficient time to acclimatize to such weather
- Have recently been ill. Athletes who have experienced a high temperature, infection, diarrhoea or vomiting should not participate and should be taken home.

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- Have a medical condition that that may predispose them to heat illness such as cystic fibrosis or diabetes.

In hot weather, parents and guardians of athletes at increased risk should carefully consider whether or not it is appropriate for the athlete to be participating in exercise.

Cancellation or Postponement

The following guidelines are not binding, but the South Australian Little Athletics Association reminds all parties that they must act responsibly. It must be taken into account that children are especially at risk in the heat and are at a greater risk of suffering from heat illness. A common sense approach is encouraged with consideration of the comfort and well-being of all individuals including participants, officials and spectators.

- Venues hosting SA Little Athletics carnivals/activities must have equipment that measures both ambient temperatures and humidity levels.
- In warm weather temperature readings should be taken at 15-minute intervals, at the same location each time. Readings should be taken in the shade.
- Once the temperature and humidity reach a level deemed appropriate by the centres/clubs of the association, public announcements should be frequent, and plenty of water and shade should be made available to the athletes and officials.
- Consideration should be given to the timing of at-risk events. When temperature and humidity reach a level deemed appropriate by the centres/clubs of the association, consideration should be given to postponing distance events until it becomes cooler.

Cold

Extended time between activities should be avoided in cold weather. Long breaks between events or exercise means that athletes' bodies can cool down, increasing the likelihood of muscle-related injuries. Athletes should be encouraged to keep warm and wear adequate clothing.

Rain

The postponement, cancellation or continuation of an event due to rain will be at the discretion of the relevant Club or Centre.

Generally speaking, most Little Athletics events will continue in the rain. Exceptions to this would include High Jump, pooling of water on a track, or when a thunderstorm including lightning is present.

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

Lightning

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Statistics show that approximately 25% of people killed by lightning are playing sport. When thunderstorms threaten, the safety of athletes, officials, coaches or spectators must remain paramount. Some 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.

Providing Warnings

Centres should promote lightning safety to athletes, officials and spectators. A protocol should be in place at each Centre to warn all individuals at risk from a lightning strike. Centres should consider placing lightning safety tips and/or emergency procedures in programs, flyers, handbooks and placing lightning safety warning signs around the venue.

SALAA will, and Centres should consider reading lightning safety messages over the PA system if thunderstorms are forecast or are imminent. The information should contain:

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

Safe structures and locations

Each Centre should define and list safe structures and locations to evacuate to in the event of lightning. No place is absolutely safe from a lightning threat however some places are safer than others.

Safe structures include:

- 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 include:

- 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 indoor phones
- Use of electrical appliances

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- Umbrellas or any object that increases a person's height

Criteria for suspension and resumption of activities

The sound of thunder should serve as an immediate warning of lightning danger. Generally speaking, if an individual can see lightning and/or hear thunder he/she is already at risk.

A procedure for announcing the suspension and resumption of activities should be in place.

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 safer place. Be aware that the thunderstorm may still be dangerous. Don't let the rescuers become victims.

Authorisation

<Signature of the Chief Executive Officer> _____

<Date of approval by the Board> _____

For Further information on this document, please contact:

The South Australian Little Athletics Association Inc.

Po Box 146 Torrensville Plaza, SA, 5031

Phone: (08) 8352 8133

Fax: (08) 8352 8155

Email: Office@salaa.org.au

Website: www.salaa.org.au