

Queensland Christian Soccer Association (QCSA)

Extreme Weather Policy



For GOD Through Sport

Est. 1969



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Policy Statement

In recent years QCSA has seen an increase in sanctioned games of football (soccer) being played outside the traditional autumn/winter seasons. The Association has also noticed that hot days are now becoming more frequent in autumn as well as spring. It is now not uncommon for there to be extremely hot days being experienced in autumn and spring as well as summer. With increased playing and training of football in the non-traditional football seasons, it is now required by QCSA to develop an extreme weather policy to cover adverse weather conditions for any QCSA sanctioned training or match.

This policy not only covers hot weather but the risk of lightning strike with or without an associated storm.

Preamble

Individual clubs are usually responsible for providing field and building facilities that are safe for players and spectators to participate for training or matches. Each club as part of its Risk Management Policy and compliance should include this QCSA Extreme Weather Policy. For this policy to be implemented safely with the interests of players, coaches, officials, volunteers, and spectators considered, a decision between the match officials (referees), and both team officials is to be made on match days.

1 Hot Weather

With higher temperatures becoming more frequent as football playing and training encroaches into spring and summer, consideration must be given to the effects of heat and humidity on all players considering age, gender and fitness levels. And this is not just for players but match officials, coaches, volunteers at the field and the comfort of spectators. The guidelines below will help officials determine when it becomes potentially unsafe to continue physical activity.

1.1 Hot Weather Guidelines

The following is provided in accordance with information provided by **Sports Medicine Australia (SMA)**. That information is referred to below under "References and Links" and should be read in conjunction with this policy.

During summer and warmer months, clubs and competition organisers are required to:

1. Be aware of the **SMA Hot Weather Guidelines**
2. Provide a copy of the **SMA Beat the Heat Fact Sheet** to all team officials prior to the event
3. Provide information in relation to sun safety
4. Schedule games and training for cooler parts of the day or evening. Where excessive temperatures have been forecasted ahead for the day of play, every effort must be taken to reschedule games or training to night-time or cooler parts of the day ahead of game day
5. Check weather forecasts the day before and closely monitor local weather conditions
6. Constantly monitor the temperature and relative humidity levels particularly when it is close to the cut off recommendations
7. Ensure regular hydration (water/fluid intake) by players, officials, and other participants
8. Monitor the wellbeing of players, officials, volunteers, and staff
9. Increase breaks during games and training to allow rest in shade and fluid intake - referees should consider allowing at least a 2-minute drinks break in each half when ambient temperatures exceed 32°C.

1.2 Recommended Temperatures for Cancellation

The following temperatures are the maximum cancellation temperature for games, training and other events (trial games, selection trials, clinics or any physical activities)

Adults (16 years and older)- games are to be cancelled or postponed at ambient temperature of 35 degrees Celsius or above

Children (Under 16 year old)- games are to be cancelled or postponed at ambient temperature of 32 degrees Celsius or above

Cancellation at lower temperatures may be necessary depending on factors such as: humidity, local conditions including radiant heat from synthetic surfaces and lack of ventilation at indoor centres; player wellbeing (taking into account gender, age and fitness level); and player acclimatisation.

Note that young children are especially at risk in the heat and should not be forced to continue playing or training if they appear distressed or complain of feeling unwell.

1.3 Reference Material

SMA Hot Weather Guideline - <https://sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2009/05/hot-weather-guidelines-web-download-doc-2007.pdf>

Beat the Heat Fact Sheet- <https://sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2017/08/beat-the-heat-2011.pdf>

2. Lightning

No lightning safety plan or policy will provide 100% guaranteed total safety, but every effort can be made to ensure that all preventative steps are taken.

Lightning poses a significant danger of death or severe injury to individuals participating in outdoor sports, causing approximately 10 fatalities and over 100 injuries annually in Australia. Direct strikes are not necessary for lightning to inflict harm; being near or in contact with an object hit by lightning can result in side-flashes or transferred energy. For instance, being within 20 meters of a tree struck by lightning places a person in a lethal zone.

Participants must prioritize the safety of players, coaches, and spectators over the urge to begin or complete a match or training session when there is a risk.

The risk to personal safety is highest when a person is outdoors during a local thunderstorm. Experts recommend maintaining a distance of over 10km from lightning to ensure safety. If lightning is detected within 10km, it is crucial to seek proper shelter immediately. In cases where weather radar or specialized lightning warning devices are unavailable, the 30/30 Guideline should be followed.

It is important to note that lightning can be hidden by clouds, and hearing thunder indicates that lightning is nearby. Additionally, clear skies do not necessarily mean the danger has passed. Always use careful judgment to assess potential threats, and if uncertain, halt outdoor activities and find safe shelter.

2.1 30/30 Guideline

If it takes less than 30 seconds to hear thunder after seeing the flash, lightning is near enough to pose a threat; after the storm ends, wait 30 minutes before resuming outdoor activities. This may mean games are delayed, cancelled, or are rescheduled.

The 30/30 guideline consists of two parts: The first part explains when outdoor activities should be stopped and participants should seek shelter; and the second part of the guideline specifies when it is safe to resume outdoor activities.

Part 1 – Stop the Activity

If the time between seeing a lightning flash and hearing thunder is less than 30 seconds, it indicates the thunderstorm is within 10km. In such cases, all outdoor activities must be halted immediately, and participants should find appropriate shelter indoors, such as in a solid building or a fully enclosed vehicle. Sheltering under trees, groups of trees, or small open structures like picnic shelters is unsafe and should be avoided.

Part 2 – When it is safe to resume the activity

Participants should wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder before returning to outdoor activities. Additional recommendations for clubs, associations, and event organizers on managing lightning risks are provided below. It is also advised that they adhere to the Australian Lightning Standard (AS1768-2007), which, while not guaranteeing complete prevention of damage or injury, can significantly lower the likelihood of such incidents. This policy is based on the Lightning Standard's Section 3, which outlines precautions for personal safety.

2.2 Prior to Match Days, Training and Events

The following checks should be made prior to Match Days, training activities, and outdoor events:

1. Check weather forecasts for likely thunderstorms on the BOM website (www.bom.gov.au).
2. Monitor forecasts in the days and hours leading up to the event and take note of any warnings if thunderstorm activity is forecast.
3. Inform participants ahead of the event that it may be disrupted due to lightning risk.

2.3 Match Days, Tournaments and Outdoor Events

1. When engaged in outdoor activities, monitor the surroundings for indications of approaching thunderstorms. These checks are particularly important when planning and conducting activities involving groups or large numbers of people.
2. Where thunderstorms are forecast or sighted, increased awareness and monitoring of lightning risk must continue until the event has finished.
3. If lightning is predicted within 10 km of the event venue at the scheduled starting time, consideration may be given to delaying the commencement of the match or event.

4. Match Play Decisions

- The decision to delay, suspend, or resume a match will be made by the Match Official based on:
 - (a) Information obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website and discussions with club officials; or
 - (b) Application of the 30/30 Guideline.

5. Tournament or Event Decisions

- The decision to delay, suspend, or resume a tournament, outdoor event, or activity will be made by the Event Organiser based on:
 - (a) Information obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website and discussions with event and/or match officials; or

(b) Application of the 30/30 Guideline.

2.4 Club Training and Activities

All clubs must monitor environmental factors, including lightning, during matches, training sessions, or any other events they conduct. Lightning risks should be assessed using information from the BOM website.

The following general guidelines should be followed:

1. If a lightning threat emerges, a designated Club Official should regularly update coaching and training staff about any emerging lightning threats and ensure they are familiar with the 30/30 Guideline.
2. Decisions to delay, suspend, or resume training or activities should be based on the 30/30 Guideline.
3. If a lightning threat arises during training, players must immediately stop and seek shelter in a building or car. They should avoid sheltering under or near trees, open structures, fences, light poles, metal poles, or umbrellas. Umbrellas and mobile phones should not be used.
4. After reassessing the storm's path, outdoor activities should only resume after a minimum of 30 minutes has passed since the last sound of thunder, as per the 30/30 Guideline.

2.5 Safety Measures

1. Seek shelter in a substantial building with normal headroom or inside a fully enclosed, metal-bodied vehicle (such as a car or truck) with a metallic roof.
2. If sheltering in a vehicle:
 - Close all windows.
 - Avoid contact with metallic parts.
 - Remove any hands-free mobile phone attachments from your body.
3. Conventional fabric shelters and tents offer no protection from lightning. Small sheds provide uncertain protection and should not be relied upon.
4. Do not shelter under trees, particularly isolated trees.
 - If surrounded by trees, move to a position outside the foliage and crouch down with your feet together.
5. Do not shelter in small sheds, pagodas, walkways, or similar structures with low, unearthened metallic roofs supported by wooden or other electrically insulating materials.
6. Do not touch or stand close to metallic structures, including wire fences, light towers, or goalposts.
7. Do not stand on or under bridges or other elevated structures.
8. Do not carry metallic objects such as umbrellas or golf clubs. Remove metallic chains and other jewellery, particularly from the head and upper parts of the body.
9. If on an open field away from shelter:
 - Keep as low and as small as possible by crouching with your feet together.
 - Do not touch any nearby objects or people.

10. A dry ditch, valley, or other ground depression is safer than elevated or flat terrain.
11. Do not lie on the ground, as dangerous voltages may develop across the body due to earth currents from a nearby lightning strike.
12. Footwear or a layer of non-absorbing, insulating material (such as plastic sheets) may offer some protection against earth voltages.
13. Do not ride or sit on bicycles or motorcycles, or otherwise elevate your body above the surrounding terrain.

2.6 Lightning Procedures

1. The team officials are responsible for monitoring the weather conditions in the surrounding areas to the fields.
2. Monitor the weather both the day before, and the day of, the match.
3. If thunderstorms occur, use the **'30/30' guideline** to determine the distance of the storm and take appropriate action to suspend play if less than 10km away.
4. Play can resume when the **'30/30'** guideline has been satisfied.
5. Where practicable, ensure that all present are relocated, if necessary, to a safe shelter.
6. Should a person be struck by lightning, ensure that immediate action is taken; and
7. Provide warnings to all potential dangers caused by lightning and indicate safety guidelines clearly.