

North East Football Extreme Weather Policy

1. Purpose

1.1 North East Football (**NEF**) recognises that extreme weather and environmental conditions can affect the health and safety of everyone involved in football. NEF has a duty of care to Participants and will take reasonable steps to reduce these risks.

1.2 The purpose of this Policy is to:

- (a) protect the health, safety and wellbeing of Participants during extreme weather;
- (b) set out a clear process for assessing extreme weather before and during Activities;
- (c) define who is responsible for decisions to modify, postpone or cancel Activities; and
- (d) ensure that football is not unnecessarily interrupted where conditions are safe.

2. Application

2.1 This Policy applies to the NEF Summer Sevens competition, including all matches and associated events.

3. Definitions

3.1 In this Policy:

Term	Meaning
Activity	Any Summer Sevens match and associated event.
BOM	The Bureau of Meteorology.
Extreme Heat	Conditions in which air temperature combined with relative humidity may cause heat stress, heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
Heat Stress Risk	The risk level (Low, Moderate, High or Extreme) produced by the SMA Heat Tool for a given location, time and sport.
Match Official	The referee appointed to officiate a match.
Participant	Any player, coach, team manager, Match Official, volunteer, parent, guardian or spectator involved in an Activity.
SMA Heat Tool	The Sports Medicine Australia Extreme Heat Policy web tool, available at sma-heat-policy.sydney.edu.au .

4. Responsibilities

4.1 NEF is responsible for:

- (a) monitoring weather forecasts and the SMA Heat Tool in the lead up to each Activity;
- (b) determining whether an Activity will proceed, be modified, postponed or cancelled; and
- (c) communicating any decision to Participants in accordance with clause 9.

4.2 The **Match Official** is responsible for monitoring conditions during a match and may delay, suspend, shorten or abandon a match where conditions become unsafe. The decision of the Match Official on the day is final.

4.3 **Team managers** are responsible for ensuring their team has adequate water, ice and wet towels available, monitoring players for signs of heat-related illness, and complying with directions from the Match Official and NEF.

4.4 **Parents and guardians** are responsible for ensuring players under 18 are adequately hydrated, sun protected and supervised.

4.5 All Participants are responsible for their own wellbeing. Nothing in this Policy prevents a Participant from withdrawing from an Activity where they consider the conditions unsafe.

5. Extreme Heat

Assessment

5.1 NEF will assess the Heat Stress Risk for an Activity using the SMA Heat Tool where the forecast air temperature at the scheduled time of play is above 32°C, or relative humidity is 30% or greater.

5.2 The assessment will be based on the forecast for the venue at the scheduled time of play, not the maximum temperature for the day. The sport selected in the SMA Heat Tool will be:

- (a) "Football (Soccer)" for Activities on natural grass; and

5.3 On the day of an Activity, NEF will reassess the Heat Stress Risk at least hourly from 12:00pm until the scheduled start time.

Required actions

5.4 The following actions apply at each Heat Stress Risk level. Actions are cumulative, so the actions for each lower level also apply at higher levels.

Heat Stress Risk	Required action
Low	Activities proceed. Participants should hydrate before, during and after the Activity and wear lightweight clothing.
Moderate	Activities proceed with additional drinks breaks, taken in the shade where available. Players may access water from the boundary without the permission of the Match Official.

Heat Stress Risk	Required action
High	Activities proceed with a two-minute cooling break in each half and active cooling during breaks (for example, ice towels applied to the neck). Matches may be shortened. Unlimited interchange is permitted.
Extreme	Activities are cancelled or postponed to a cooler time. Any Activity in progress is to be stopped immediately and Participants moved to shade.

Where the SMA Heat Tool is unavailable

5.5 Where the SMA Heat Tool or relative humidity data is unavailable, Activities will be cancelled or postponed where the forecast air temperature at the scheduled time of play is:

- (a) 32°C or above, for Activities involving Participants under 18 years of age; or
- (b) 37°C or above, for adult Activities.

Discretion

5.6 The SMA Heat Tool provides an estimate only. NEF may modify, postpone or cancel an Activity at a lower Heat Stress Risk having regard to local conditions, including radiant heat from the playing surface, lack of shade and the acclimatisation of Participants.

6. Lightning and Thunderstorms

6.1 Where the time between seeing a lightning flash and hearing thunder is less than 30 seconds, the storm is considered to be within 10 kilometres and all outdoor Activity must cease immediately.

6.2 Participants must seek shelter in a solid building or a fully enclosed vehicle. Trees, open-sided shelters, dugouts, umbrellas and marquees do not provide safe shelter. Participants should keep away from goals, fences and light towers.

6.3 Activity must not resume until at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard. Each further clap of thunder restarts the 30 minute period.

6.4 The decision to suspend play rests with the Match Official for matches, and with NEF for all other Activities.

6.5 Where thunderstorms are forecast, NEF will monitor BOM radar from the afternoon of the Activity and may cancel the Activity in advance.

7. Other Weather and Environmental Conditions

7.1 **Air quality.** NEF will monitor EPA Victoria AirWatch for the Wodonga area during periods of smoke or dust. Where air quality is rated "Poor", NEF may shorten or modify Activities and Participants with asthma or respiratory conditions should not participate. Where air quality is rated "Very Poor" or worse, all Activities will be cancelled.

7.2 **Bushfire.** All Activities will be cancelled on days declared a Catastrophic fire danger rating for the North East district, or where an emergency warning is current for the Wodonga area.

7.3 **Wind.** Activities will be cancelled where BOM issues a severe weather warning for damaging winds affecting the Wodonga area. Portable goals must be secured or laid flat at all times.

7.4 Rain and ground conditions. Activities will proceed in rain unless the ground is closed by Wodonga City Council or deemed unfit for play by NEF or the Match Official due to waterlogging, surface damage or poor visibility.

8. Heat-Related Illness

8.1 All coaches, team managers and Match Officials should be familiar with the signs of heat-related illness and the immediate first aid response set out below.

Condition	Signs and symptoms	Immediate response
Heat exhaustion	Heavy sweating, pale skin, dizziness, headache, nausea, muscle cramps, fatigue.	Stop activity. Move to shade, lie down and elevate legs. Remove excess clothing, provide cool water and apply wet towels or ice to the neck, armpits and groin.
Heat stroke	Confusion, slurred speech, hot and possibly dry skin, vomiting, collapse, seizures.	Medical emergency. Call 000. Cool the person rapidly with ice, cold water and wet towels while waiting. Do not give fluids unless fully alert.

8.2 Any Participant who collapses during an Activity in hot conditions is to be treated as suffering heat stroke until proven otherwise, and an ambulance must be called on 000.

9. Cancellation and Communication

9.1 Where an Activity is cancelled or postponed in advance under this Policy, NEF will endeavour to notify Participants by 3:00pm on the day of the Activity. Later notice may be given where conditions change.

9.2 Notice will be given through:

- (a) the Dribl app;
- (b) NEF social media channels;
- (c) email to registered Participants; and
- (d) direct contact with appointed Match Officials.

9.3 Team managers are responsible for passing notice on to their players.

9.4 Where no notice has been issued, Participants should assume the Activity will proceed as scheduled.

10. Match Results

10.1 A match cancelled before kick-off under this Policy will be recorded as a 0-0 draw unless rescheduled by NEF.

10.2 A match abandoned after kick-off under this Policy will be recorded as:

- (a) a 0-0 draw, where less than half of the match has been played; or
- (b) the score at the time of abandonment, where half or more of the match has been played.

10.3 Registration fees will not be refunded for Activities cancelled under this Policy.

11. Policy Review

11.1 This Policy will be reviewed by NEF prior to each summer season, or earlier where relevant guidance from Sports Medicine Australia or other authorities changes.

11.2 This Policy is general in nature and does not constitute medical advice. In an emergency, call 000.