



**Little
Athletics**
Victoria

Heat Policy

Of

Little Athletics Association of Victoria Inc

Registration Number: A0003260D

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1.1 RELATED DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Vicsport *Hot Weather Guidelines for Sport and Active Recreation*, the Sports Medicine Australia *Extreme Heat Policy (2021)* plus other Little Athletics Victoria ('LAVic') policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

- [Constitution](#)
- [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- [Child Safe Policy](#)
- [Member Protection Policy](#)

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines LAVic's approach to protecting the safety of participants during hot weather. Hot weather creates risks that participants may experience a form of exertional heat illness, such as muscle cramps, fainting, heat exhaustion and even heat stroke.

Vicsport (2024) defines exertional heat illness as:

A term used for medical conditions caused by exposure to heat during physical activity. It includes the following conditions which can occur during participation in sport or active recreation:

- *Muscle cramps*
- *Heat Syncope (Fainting)*
- *Heat exhaustion*
- *Heat stroke*

The conduct of Little Athletics competition at any levels requires contributions from a significant number of volunteers, who may be required assist for multiple hours at a time. The age of our volunteers for any given event may vary significantly, from teenagers through to seniors. Accordingly the physical capability of volunteers, and their resilience when exposed to extreme heat conditions may also vary significantly.

The aim of LAVic's Heat Policy (the Policy) is to:

- Protect the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who participates, including athletes, volunteers, families, coaches and officials.
- Detail strategies for participation to continue with appropriate mitigation and risk management strategies in place.
- Provide guidance to event, competition and training organisers regarding the effective management of hot and extreme weather conditions.

Should a person wish to make any enquiries in relation to this Policy, please contact the Little Athletics Victoria Chief Executive Officer at office@lavic.com.au.

1.3 POLICY STATEMENT

LAVic is committed to ensuring our sport is accessible to everyone and we take every opportunity to provide the highest level of service to all who engage with our sport. LAVic

has a duty of care to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all engaged in our sport, during warm to very hot weather and heatwaves.

When there is a risk of exertional heat illness, LAVic commits to acting in the best interest of all participants by implementing mitigation strategies.

LAVic's administrators, including employees, Board members, Region committee members, affiliated Centres and Clubs, must closely and regularly monitor weather forecasts and comply with this policy when conducting or managing sanctioned events, especially, training and competitions.

1.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LITTLE ATHLETICS PERSONNEL

Personnel involved in protecting participants from exertional heat illness include the Board, LAVic employees, and Region, Centre & Club committee members within the Organisation. Those people have responsibilities in relation to protection of all members and are expected to:

- Understand the risks of exertional heat illness, as appropriate to their role.
- Understand and appropriately respond to the needs of participants who are more vulnerable to exertional heat illness.
- Appropriately act on any concerns raised by participants about exertional heat illness.
- Understand the definitions, indicators and impact of exertional heat illness.
- Know and follow guidelines in relation to the care of all members during warm to very hot weather, and at times of extended periods of exceptionally high day and night-time temperatures (heatwaves).

1.5 SCOPE

This policy applies to a range of people, safety risks and activities. LAVic, Regions, affiliated Centres and Clubs must comply with this policy.

1.5.1 People

This policy applies to all people involved in sport of Little Athletics in both a formal and casual basis, including Board members, employees, Associate Members, Competitive Members (athletes), volunteers, Region, Centre & Club committee members, officials, coaches, families, spectators, contractors, suppliers and sponsors.

1.5.2 Safety Risks

This policy is designed to reduce the risks and prevalence of injury and illness which can occur during physical activity and prolonged exposure to hot weather. This includes the following:

- Exertional Heat Illnesses: muscle cramps, heat syncope (fainting), heat exhaustion and heat stroke. These can occur during warm to hot weather.
- Dehydration: headache, delirium and confusion, tiredness (fatigue), dizziness, weakness and light-headedness.

- Sunburn: pain from sunburn usually starts within a few hours of the burn. The skin will get redder and more irritated, with pain peaking at about 24 hours after the burn. Blistering will occur with second-degree sunburn.

1.5.3 Activities

This policy applies to the following activities where LAVic and our Regions, affiliated Centres and Clubs have a duty of care to participants:

- Weekly Centre competitions
- Centre Championships
- Centre Competition trials
- Open Days
- Centre training
- Camps
- Clinics
- Social activities
- Working bees
- Education courses
- LAVic State & Region competitions

1.6 USING THE LAVIC EXTREME HEAT POLICY

LAVic has aligned this policy with the 'Sport Risk Classification – 3' setting of Sports Medicine Australia's Extreme Heat Policy (v 1.0, February 2021) for the assessment of extreme heat conditions for Little Athletics activities.

Climate forecasts are available up to seven days before an event. People with responsibility and authority of participants should monitor forecast ambient temperatures so that appropriate plans and communications can take place.

To predict the heat risk associated with participation in a relevant sporting classification, the temperature and humidity for the location where competition or practice will be taking place needs to be acquired.

It is essential that the temperature during the time of play is used with the accompanying relative humidity at that specific time.

To obtain a forecast of temperature and humidity for the upcoming 7 days:

- i. Visit: <http://www.bom.gov.au/places/> and enter the location/post code;
- ii. Click on: "DETAILED 3-HOURLY FORECAST";
- iii. Select the specific day/date of enquiry;
- iv. Identify the column with the nearest time to the planned competition/practice;
- v. Note the "Air Temperature (°C)" value;

vi. AND IN THE SAME COLUMN, note the concurrent "Relative Humidity (%)" value found towards the bottom of the entry for that date.

If climate conditions (like heatwaves) are likely to pose an increased risk to people's health, the Victorian [Department of Health](#) will issue a Heat Health Alert ('HHA'; alternatively, [NSW Health](#)). All event managers should subscribe to the HHA system and be notified of current heat health alerts in Victoria.

The combined Air Temperature (x-axis) and Relative Humidity (y-axis) should then be plotted on the chart below. The point of intersection of these two values will subsequently fall in one of 4 coloured zones indicating a given level of heat stress risk:

GREEN: Low Risk

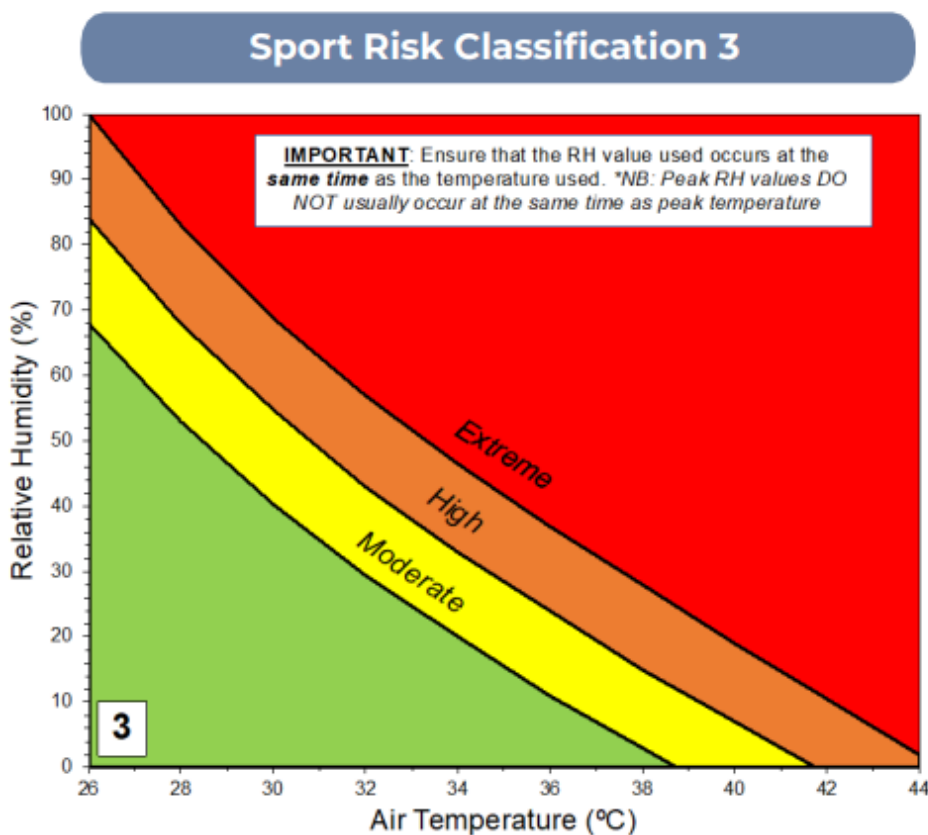
YELLOW: Moderate Risk

ORANGE: High Risk

RED: Extreme Risk

Refer to the following chart to determine the relative risk of planned Little Athletics activities.

Note: Little Athletics activities scheduled to take place during conditions forecast as 'Extreme' should not proceed.



1.6.1 GREEN – Hydrate

When heat stress risk is low, maintaining hydration through regular fluid consumption and modifying clothing is still a simple, yet effective, way of keeping cool and preserving health and performance during the summer months. Suggested actions:

- Ensure pre-exercise hydration by consuming 6 ml of water per kilogram of body weight every 2-3 hours before exercise. For a 70kg individual, this equates to 420ml of fluid every 2-3 hours (a standard sports drink bottle contains 500ml).
- Drink regularly throughout exercise. Aim to drink enough to offset sweat losses, but it is important to avoid over-drinking because this can also have negative health effects. To familiarise oneself with how much one will typically sweat, suggest weighing oneself before and after practice or competition.
- Promote drinking to thirst before, during and after physical activity and reducing intake of sugar sweetened beverages, coffee and alcohol.

The clothing/equipment worn can influence how quickly an individual heats up during exercise. This is specially apt for officials and volunteers. Simple clothing modifications can help to keep an individual cool. Suggestions include:

- Where possible, select light-weight and breathable clothing with extra ventilation;
- Remove unnecessary clothing/equipment and/or excess clothing layers;
- Reduce the amount of skin that is covered by clothing – this will help increase sweat evaporation, aiding heat dissipation.

NOTE: Sunscreen does NOT impede sweating or affect heat loss from the skin. Sunscreen should be applied regularly, as per instructions, to avoid sunburn.

1.6.2 YELLOW – Rest breaks and scheduling

In addition to the GREEN settings:

When the heat stress risk is moderate, increasing the frequency and/or duration of rest breaks during exercise or sporting activities is an effective way of reducing the risk of heat illness even if minimal resources are available.

- During all breaks in competition or training, everyone should seek shade – if natural shade is not available, marquees should be provided for athletes and officials, and water made freely available;
- Consider changing the scheduling of endurance events to a cooler part of the day;
- Consider reducing the length and or duration of competition & training activities;
- Consider including additional rest and drink breaks;
- Consider shortening the event to reduce the exposure;
- Shortening official's exposure to high risk conditions by increasing rotations or decreasing workload.
- Provide extra shade, eg additional marquees, umbrellas etc.

NOTE: While hats provide UV protection, they provide minimal protection against the heat.

1.6.3 ORANGE – Active cooling

In addition to the **GREEN** and **YELLOW** settings:

When the heat stress risk is high, active cooling strategies should be applied during scheduled and additional rest breaks, or before and during activity. Below are strategies that have been shown to effectively reduce body temperature.

- Drinking cold fluids and/or ice slushies before exercise commences. Note that cold water and ice slushy ingestion during exercise is less effective for cooling. Ice boxes are effective means of storing and keeping drinks cold.
- Submerge arms/feet in cold water;
- Water dousing – wetting the skin with cool water using a sponge or a spray bottle helps increase evaporation, which is the most effective cooling mechanism in the heat; garden sprinklers are also effective.
- Ice packs/towels – placing an ice pack or damp towel filled with crushed ice around the neck;
- Electric (misting) fans – outdoor fans can help keep the body cool, especially when combined with a water misting system. LAVic may provide industrial misting machines at State & Region events.
- Consider reducing breaking up field events into smaller groups to assist the athletes and officials complete their field events in a shorter period and reduce their exposure.
- Exclude high intensity activities such as longer competition events and training runs.
- If available, provide an airconditioned area for people to seek relief from the heat.

1.6.4 RED – Stop exercising

When the heat stress risk is extreme, exercise/play **MUST** be suspended. If play has commenced, then all activities **MUST** be stopped as soon as possible.

- All athletes, officials and volunteers should seek shade or cool refuge in an air-conditioned space if available;
- Active cooling strategies should be applied;
- Consider postponing to future times/dates, and/or cancelling planned events, competitions or activities.

1.6.5 General

- Avoid participants (including volunteers or officials) waiting for long periods in full sun;
- Parents have the option to remove children from activities, or not attend at all, if they believe it is too hot;
- LAVic will encourage participants to speak up if they feel unwell;
- Encourage athletes and families to bring additional drinking water;
- Provide officials with a regular supply of chilled drinking water;
- Encourage participants to bring ice slurry drinks and cold towels.

1.6.6 Incidents

- It's preferred, but not essential, that qualified first aid personnel are on site when Little Athletics activities are conducted during hot weather;

- Monitor athletes, officials and volunteers closely and recognise signs and symptoms of exertional heat illness;
- Present a range of strategies for internal cooling of a participant such as cold fluids and ice-slurry drinks;
- Present a range of strategies for externally cooling a participant such as cold-water immersion, cooling garments, cold wet towels, and fanning.

1.7 RECOGNISING EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

A person may, during the course of participating in the sport or other activities of LAVic develop signs and symptoms of exertional heat illness.

Exertional heat illness can be life threatening, therefore, if a person is concerned about an immediate risk to an individual's health and safety, the person must phone **"000"** (or alternatively **"112"** from a mobile when you are out of your service provider's coverage area) as soon as practicable.

Exertional heat illnesses can be categorised from mild to severe.

1.7.1 Muscle cramps

Symptoms include abdominal, arm or leg muscle pains or spasms. This may be a result from the loss of salt and water due to heat and exertion.

First aid treatment may include:

- Stop sport or activity.
- Rest in a cool environment.
- Hydrate.
- Replenishing electrolytes.
- Rest before continuing to be active in sport or activity.
- Seek medical help if there is no improvement.

1.7.2 Heat syncope (fainting)

Symptoms include dizziness, fainting, headache and vomiting. This is a result a sudden drop in blood pressure as blood flows away from the major organs to the extremities (skin) to try and cool down.

First aid treatment may include:

- Stop sport or activity.
- Rest in a cool environment.
- Hydrate.
- Seeking additional medical help if there is no improvement.

1.7.3 Heat exhaustion

Symptoms include profuse sweating, weakness, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, muscle cramps, rapid weak pulse and extreme thirst. It occurs when excessive sweating reduces the blood volume due to a loss of salt and water due to heat and exertion.

First aid treatment may include:

- Stop sport or activity.
- Lay person down in a cool environment.
- Cool body (remove outer clothing or wet clothes, mist skin with cool water, fan/aircon).
- Hydrate.
- Seek medical advice (If needed call triple zero "000" or "112" from a mobile).
- Prepare to give CPR if necessary.

Please note: This is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke.

1.7.4 Heat stroke

This is a medical emergency and requires urgent attention. Symptoms include red, hot and dry skin (no sweating), rapid pulse, confusion, irrational behaviour, seizures, and unconsciousness. Heatstroke occurs when the core body temperature rises above 40°C and the body's internal systems start to shut down. Many organs in the body suffer damage and the body temperature must be reduced quickly.

First aid treatment may include:

- Call triple zero "000" for an ambulance (or "112" from a mobile).
- Lay person down in a cool environment.
- **Do not** give the person fluids to drink.
- Cool body (remove outer clothing or wet clothes, mist skin with cool water, fan/aircon).
- Place ice packs *(wrapped in towel) under armpits and groin;
- **Stop cooling** if person starts shivering.
- **Position an unconscious person on their side and clear their airway.**
- Prepare to give CPR if necessary.

1.8 RISK FACTORS FOR EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

LAVic recognises that multiple factors pose a risk to the health and safety of participants, including the environment, factors specific to individuals and factors specific to our sport.

1.8.1 Environmental Risk Factors

Climate related environmental risk factors can increase the risk of illness and injury. Risk factors include:

- Air temperature.
- Humidity (it becomes more difficult to regulate body temperature in higher humidity due to a decrease in sweat evaporation).

- Wind speed (this affects the rate of water evaporation).
- Radiant temperature (such as radiant heat from ground surface).

1.8.2 Individual Risk Factors

The following individual risk factors are relevant our participants These factors need to be understood by everyone involved in our sport, especially coaches, officials and first aid providers.

a) Age

Children and adults over 65 are considered at greater risk of heat illnesses.

b) Poor physical condition

Some people may experience an exertional heat illness at lower temperatures due to exercising or being active beyond their current capacity.

c) Inadequate acclimatisation

This can take place when the body is not conditioned to warm and/or humid climates.

d) Illness or medical conditions

Individuals may be more affected by heat due to medications and illness.

e) Dehydration and electrolyte imbalances

Good hydration is needed to keep the body's core temperature down during sport or hot conditions. People must rehydrate to compensate for what the body loses in sweat.

f) High intensity and duration of exercise

Causes the body temperature to rise and to sweat more, and increases the risk of heat illness.

1.8.3 Extrinsic / Sport Risk Factors

Extrinsic risk factors are specific characteristics of the sport activity which can contribute to an increased risk of exertional heat illness. The following risk factors are relevant to Little Athletics. Many of these risk factors can be adjusted to reduce some of the risk of exertional heat illness.

a) Excessive clothing and athletic gear

Officials wearing dark coloured clothing, long sleeves and full length trousers may increase their risk of exertional heat illness during warm to hot conditions.

b) Lack of awareness and education of exertional heat illness

If participants are not aware of the signs and symptoms of exertional heat illness this can pose an increased risk to their health as they may not undertake appropriate preparation steps. LAVic will take steps to educate all participants about the meaning and risks of exertional heat illness.

c) Venue and location

Different surfaces radiate various levels of heat.

The following playing surfaces are ranked from coolest to hottest in radiant heat emission:

- Natural grass
- Synthetic turf
- Synthetic rubber
- Rubberised asphalt
- Asphalt

d) Level and duration of activities

More vigorous physical activity increases the body's core temperature, posing a greater risk of exertional heat illnesses. Activities that continue without regular breaks can also pose an increased risk to participants.

These include:

- Racewalking;
- Endurance events: 400m, 800m, 1500m;
- Officiating.

e) Time of play

During hot weather the warmest parts of the day should be avoided. Times of day ranked from most risk to least risk are:

1. 11 am – 3pm;
2. 3pm – sunset ;
3. 9am – 11 am;
4. Evening (after sunset);
5. Early morning (before 9am).

State Championships, Region Carnivals, Centre Open Days, education activities and clinics tend to be held over multiple hours duration. Different and multiple mitigation strategies maybe required at different stages of the same event.

1.9 ACTIVATING THIS POLICY

This heat policy must be referred to if it is determined by LAVic, Regions, Centres or Clubs that there is a risk of exertional heat illnesses during immediate or upcoming Little Athletics activities.

Requirements for LAVic, Regions, Centres and Clubs to determine heat risk levels include:

- Assessing the risk of any upcoming training sessions, activities, competitions or events.
- Obtaining local weather forecast before and on the day of training sessions, activities, competitions and events.

This policy is activated when any of the following apply:

- Forecast temperature is above 26C.
- A Heat Health Alert is issued for the relative region of Victoria in which the event will take place.
- A total fire ban has been declared.

While the policy is activated when the forecast temperature is above 26C, modifications are more likely to be required at much higher temperatures and/or humidity.

LAVic, Regions, Centres and Clubs will promptly communicate any potential or actual changes and mitigation strategies if there is a risk of exertional heat illness to participants.

1.9.1 Making decisions

- Weekly Centre/Club competitions & training are the responsibility of the Centre/Club committees.
- Centre Championships are the responsibility of the Centre committees.
- Centre Competition trials are the responsibility of the Centre committees.
- Centre Open Days are the responsibility of the organising Centre Committee.
- Camps are the responsibility of the organising body.
- Social activities are the responsibility of the organising body.
- Working bees are the responsibility of the organising body.
- State education programs such as skills clinics, training courses and training squads are the responsibility of the LAVic Education Manager and CEO.
- Region events are the responsibility of the Region Competition Director, the LAVic Competitions Manager and the CEO.
- State competition events are the responsibility of the LAVic Competitions Manager and the CEO.

1.10 REFERENCES

Sports Medicine Australia Extreme Heat Policy, 2021

- <https://sma.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SMA-Extreme-Heat-Policy-2021-Final-1.pdfme>

Vicsport 'Hot Weather Guidelines for Active Sport and Recreation', 2019

- <https://goodcdn.app/memberhq/vicsport/uploads/Hot-Weather-Guidelines-for-Sport--2019.pdf>

SECTION 3 - DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Version #	Action Taken / Updates
December 2024	1.0	New document