

BIRCHWOOD COLTS JFC

EXTREME WEATHER POLICY



INTRODUCTION

Environmental factors can affect players participating in football training and football matches. While environmental factors will not usually influence whether football activities should commence or continue, occasionally extremely adverse weather conditions may give rise to a need to assess whether players and/or officials are in environmental danger. This policy sets out the approach for football activities participated in by club members of Birchwood Colts JFC and the recommended procedures we should adopt when assessing extreme weather conditions to ensure we maintain a duty of care to all our players and club members..

1. Extreme Heat

Heat related stress can lead to impaired player performance (e.g. dizziness, headaches, collapse and illness). In its extreme form, heat can be life threatening. Preventing heat stress and injury maintains optimum performance and improves recovery. To prevent heat stress careful planning and preparation is required in accordance with this section.

1.1 Preliminary Assessment

Managers should assess the heat stress risk by reviewing information provided by the local weather/meteorology services. Heat stress management strategies should also be applied at all training sessions.

1.2 Onus on Player

Players have a responsibility to ensure that the impact of environmental factors such as extreme heat is not exacerbated by their own conduct. Accordingly, the following general guidelines should be followed. Players should:

- ensure adequate fluid intake prior to game and during game
- monitor their own hydration;
- notify medical and coaching staffs if they are effected by heat or when
- if possible use water and electrolyte drinks;
- use pre-game, game and post-game cooling strategies i.e. use of shade and rest
- do not play in extreme heat if they are suffering with or recovering from an illness;
- apply sun protection factor 30+ sunscreen in sunny conditions.

1.3 Club Responsibility

Managers/coaches with teams competing in a competition administered by the Football Governing Body should monitor environmental factors such as extreme heat both in matches and at training sessions administered by the Club. The Club should assess the heat stress risk by reviewing information provided by the local weather/meteorology services. Heat stress management strategies should also be applied at all training sessions administered by the Club. The following general guidelines should be followed. Clubs should:

- use cooling aids if available spray bottles, sponges, fans (in rooms) and use shade;
- report incidents of heat stress illness in all players to the Football Governing Body;
- Club officials to be delegated the primary responsibility of monitoring and manage players for heat stress issues as they arise during a match or training;
- provide additional adequate fluids in appropriate bottles;
- ensure trainers are fit enough to access as many players as possible during the game;
- coordinate training times outside extreme conditions;
- where possible provide facilities for player cooling shade, air conditioning, sprays and fans whether training or playing.

1.4 Relevant Body Responsibility

- Where possible, the Football Governing Body should schedule Matches as much to avoid extremes of heat and allow for increased recovery from those conditions. The Football Body should also endeavour to schedule Matches at venues equipped with cooling facilities in high risk circumstances
- increase the number of water carriers to run fluids
- increase the length of intervals to enable teams to leave the field for the shade of the rooms at each break
- reduce length of quarters
- consider postponing or rescheduling games

First Aid Treatment

The club is required to provide first aid requirements for players, competitions and training sessions. Players with any symptoms of heat illness must immediately cease exercising. They shall have immediate first aid treatment including:

- find shade for the player if possible
- strip off any excess clothing
- soak with water
- fan
- ice packs placed in groin and armpits.

The aim is to reduce body temperature as quickly as possible. The player should immediately be referred for urgent treatment by a medical professional. Important: Heat exhaustion/stroke can still occur even in the presence of good hydration.

2. Lightning

Lightning is considered to be a possible or actual threat to players participating in football activities the following procedures are applicable:

- The observation of approaching storm clouds, the first flash of lightning or clap of thunder, no matter how far away should heighten lightning awareness. The level of risk depends on one's location (direction and distance) relative to the storm cell and the direction in which the storm system is traveling.
- A simple method of determining the distance to the storm cell is to measure the time elapsed from when the lightning flash is observed and when the associated clap of thunder is heard.
- Light travels faster than sound. Assuming that the light from the flash reaches the observer instantaneously, and knowing that sound takes approximately three (3) seconds to travel one (1) kilometre, the distance can be determined by using the following rule: Distance (in Km) = Time from observing the flash to hearing thunder (in 3 seconds)
- It is important to remember that lightning may be obscured by clouds so it must be assumed that when thunder is heard, lightning is in the vicinity. In such cases, careful judgment must be used to determine whether a threat exists
- The initial consideration would be to the postponement or suspension of activities. Most experts agree that the accepted "safe" distance from lightning is greater than 10km. This means that as the time interval between observing the flash and hearing the thunder approaches 30 seconds, all those in exposed areas should be seeking or already inside safe shelters. A storm cell with lightning activity within 10km constitutes a threat.
- The criteria for the resumption of football activities is recommended that people wait a minimum of 30 minutes after the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder. This figure is based on the observation that the typical storm moves at about 40km/h. Thus, waiting 30 minutes allows the thunderstorm to be about 20km away, minimising the likelihood of a nearby lightning strike.
- It is important to emphasise that blue skies and lack of rainfall are not adequate reasons to breach the 30 minute minimum return to activity rule.

2.1 General Lightning Safety Guideline

Precautions to take prior to football activities

- where weather forecasts provide important warning of possible thunderstorm activity the Coaches/Managers should monitor weather forecasts to assess whether it is safe to proceed or postpone.

Match Day

- Increased awareness of lightning risk should continue on the day of the football activity until the activity has finished.
- If lightning is predicted within no less than 10km of the football venue at the scheduled starting time the commencement time may need to be delayed by up to 60 minutes.
- Any decision to delay or suspend a match as well as resume play would need to be made by the Match Referee based on information available and discussions with the teams.

Club Responsibility

All Clubs competing in a competition administered by the Football Governing Body should monitor environmental factors such as lightning both in Matches and at any Football training sessions administered by the Club. The following general guidelines should also be followed:

- If a lightning threat emerges, the nominated Club Official must contact all relevant coaching staff and provide updates on a regular basis.
- A decision to delay, suspend or resume training should be made in consultation with relevant coaching and administration staff.
- If players are training when the lightning threat becomes real then they should leave the training venue immediately and take shelter inside a building or metal framed car. They should not shelter under or near trees.
- Once the storm's path has been reassessed, there must be a minimum of 30 minutes elapsed before returning to training.

First Aid Treatment

Where a person is struck by lightning, call 999 at once. As all deaths from lightning arise from cardiac arrest and/or stopping of breathing, apply CPR until medical assistance arrives. The person performing CPR will not receive an electric shock from the victim. If proper treatment is administered, most victims survive a lightning strike.

3. Hail

Hailstorms may present a risk to participants depending upon the size and intensity of the storm. Where a hailstorm occurs during matches, the match official on the day will determine if it poses a risk to the participants. If the Match Official deems that there is a risk, the game can be suspended during the hailstorm so that players and officials can seek suitable shelter. Once the hailstorm has ceased, the match official may decide to resume play taking into consideration the condition and safety of the field and other conditions associated with a hailstorm such as drop in temperature, rainfall and increased winds. If it is not safe to resume (or start) the game, the match official can abandon the game.

4. Heavy Rain

Managers/Coaches must ensure that they give due consideration to the well-being of the players if training is carried out in conditions of heavy rain. If there is a potential health risk to players i.e. chills, colds, flu etc then training should not proceed or continue. Managers/Coaches should also take into consideration whether the ground is safe to train on if players cannot get adequate grip with their footwear. Players may not be able to control challenges for the ball, which could result in injuries. All decisions relating to heavy rain during a match will be the match official's responsibility, whether the game should be temporarily suspended or abandoned. In summary training in heavy or torrential rain is of no benefit to players or coaches alike as there is little opportunity to coach or learn and a higher risk of injury.

5. Snow & Extreme cold

Travelling to training and matches must always be a consideration and not just the playing/training venue ground conditions. Players must be able to travel to and from the venue safely so road conditions may well have to be taken into consideration if players are not local.

If the temperature is below freezing ground conditions could be very hard, which could increase the risk of injury to players. Coaches and referees should carry out ground hardness tests especially in goalmouths prior to any competitive football activities.

In poor weather keeping the players busy is vital. Young children will go cold quickly almost without noticing and once they are cold they will really struggle to warm up again. Telling them to run around a bit more won't help either unfortunately it's too late by then.

On arrival activity is vital. The children should arrive warm and getting them active early is crucial. Little games of tag, mini 1v1s or 2v2s, and small fundamental movement games will all do this. Make sure you have this section in your session plan ready to go whatever the weather.

Having queues of children waiting for their turn is a big no-no in any session let alone on a cold, wet day. Can you find ways to make sure all the players are all involved all of the time? If you are struggling for equipment could you set up two or three smaller areas rather than one in order to cut down any form of waiting?

Wet and cold sessions are perfect for match time as it keeps them all involved and active. Play mini 3v3s on a couple of pitches to keep all involved and then carefully manage how you intervene to coach. Work with individuals rather than stopping the whole group

Children don't like coaches talking for ages at the best of times but on a wet day it's even more important to keep communication concise. Can you coach individuals whilst the game plays on around them? Could you give quick challenges to players 'on the fly' as they pass you? Could you set yourself a challenge to intervene for no longer than 30 seconds? The kids would really appreciate this.