

# NATIONAL EXTREME WEATHER POLICY

February 2013



## 1. Application

The *National Extreme Weather Policy (Policy)*, if formally adopted, applies to an Australian Football league that is conducted or administered by:

- (a) a State or Territory league or body that is affiliated with the AFL, including:
  - a. NSW/ACT: AFL (NSW/ACT) Commission Ltd ACN 086 839 385;
  - b. NT: AFL (Northern Territory) Ltd ACN 097 620 525;
  - c. QLD: AFL (Queensland) ACN 090 629 342;
  - d. SA: South Australian Football League Inc ABN 59 518 757 737;
  - e. TAS AFL (TAS) ACN 135 346 986;
  - f. Victoria: Australian Football League (Victoria) ACN 147 664 579;
  - g. WA West Australian Football Commission ABN 51 167 923 136); or
- (b) an entity or body that is affiliated with (or licensed by) an Affiliated State or Territory Body.

### **(Football Body)**

If applicable to the Football Body, Australian Football: players; coaches; officials; spectators; and administrators and all people reasonably connected to the Football Body **(Members)** must comply with the Policy.

## **2. Policy Statement**

Environmental factors regularly affect the playing of Australian Football. While environmental factors will not usually influence whether an Australian Football Match should commence or continue to be played, 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 that the Football Body should adopt when assessing extreme weather conditions.

## **3. Extreme Heat**

Heat-related stress can lead to impaired player performance (eg 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 3.

### **3.1 Preliminary Assessment**

The Football Body should assess the heat stress risk by reviewing information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology. Heat stress management strategies should also be applied at all training sessions.

### **3.2 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.

(a) Players should:

- (i) ensure adequate fluid intake prior to game and during game (500-700mls per quarter);
- (ii) monitor hydration;
- (iii) notify medical and coaching staffs when effected by heat or when performance is noticeably effected;
- (iv) use water and electrolyte drinks;
- (v) use pre-game, game and post-game cooling strategies;
- (vi) do not play in the heat with an illness; and
- (vii) apply sun protection factor 30+ sunscreen in sunny conditions.

### **3.3 Club Responsibility**

All Clubs competing in a competition administered by the Football Body should monitor environmental factors such as extreme heat both in Matches and at any Australian Football training session administered by the Club. The Club should assess the heat stress risk by reviewing information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology. Heat stress

management strategies should also be applied at all training sessions administered by the Club.

The following general guidelines should be followed:

(a) Clubs should:

- (i) use cooling aids if available – ice vests, spray bottles, sponges, fans (in rooms and on interchange bench) and shade;
- (ii) choose heat permeable jumpers and socks;
- (iii) report incidents of heat stress illness in all players to the Football Body;
- (iv) use a Club official to be delegated the primary responsibility of monitoring and manage players for heat stress issues as they arise during a Match;
- (v) provide adequate fluids in appropriate bottles;
- (vi) ensure trainers are fit enough to access as many players as possible during the game;
- (vii) coordinate training times outside extreme conditions; and
- (viii) provide facilities for player cooling – shade, air conditioning, sprays and fans whether training or playing.

### **3.4 Relevant Body Responsibility**

Where possible, the Football 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 – cool room (where possible), fans, shade, air conditioning and emergency medical facilities.

In addition, the Football Body may:

- (a) increase the number of water carriers to run fluids
- (b) increase the length of intervals to enable teams to leave the field for the shade of the rooms at each break
- (c) reduce length of quarters
- (d) consider postponing or rescheduling games

## **4. Lightning**

### **4.1 AS1768-2007**

The Football Body should comply with AS1768-2007, entitled *The Lightning Protection Standard*, published on 10 January 2007 (**Lightning Standard**). While the Lightning Standard will not necessarily prevent damage or personal injury due to lightning, it will reduce the probability of such damage or injury occurring.

## 4.2 30/30 Safety Guideline

In the absence of specific information from weather radar, a lightning location system, or a specialised warning device then the 30/30 Safety Guideline should be used.

According to the 30/30 Safety Guideline, when lightning is considered to be a possible or actual threat to an Australian Football Match the following procedures are applicable:

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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:  
$$\text{Distance (in Km)} = \text{Time from observing the flash to hearing thunder (in 3 seconds)}$$
- (d) 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
- (e) The first part of the "30/30" rule is a guide 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.
- (f) The second part of the 30/30 rule provides the criteria for the resumption of activity which is applicable to decisions made with BOM access as well. Here, it 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.
- (g) 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.

## 4.3 General Lightning Safety Guideline

- (a) Prior to Match Day
  - (i) where weather forecasts provide important warning of possible thunderstorm activity the Football Body should monitor weather forecasts

commencing Tuesday prior to scheduled Matches using the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website. Note should be taken off any warnings posted;

- (ii) The Football Body should continue to monitor the BOM site in the days leading up to the match.

(b) Match Day

- (i) Increased awareness of lightning risk should continue on the Match day until the activity has finished.
- (ii) Teams and officials should proceed to the venue unless otherwise directed.
- (iii) If lightning is predicted within no less than 10km of the match venue at the scheduled starting time the game commencement time may be delayed by up to 60 minutes.
- (iv) This decision to delay or suspend play as well as resume play will be made by the Umpire based on information obtained from the BOM and discussions with the Clubs.

### 4.3 Club Responsibility

All Clubs competing in a competition administered by the Football Body should monitor environmental factors such as lightning both in Matches and at any Australian Football training session administered by the Club. The Club should assess the lightning risk by reviewing information provided by the BOM.

(a) The following general guidelines should also be followed:

- (i) If a lightning threat emerges, the nominated Club Official must contact all relevant coaching, rehabilitation and training staff and provide updates on a regular basis.
- (ii) A decision to delay, suspend or resume training should be made in consultation with relevant coaching and administration staff.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) Once the storm's path has been reassessed, there must be a minimum of 30 minutes elapsed before returning to training.
- (v) When there is no access to the BOM, the "30/30" rule serves as a guide for the suspension and subsequent resumption of activities.