



WATER POLO AUSTRALIA

Sun Safety, Extreme Weather and Playing Conditions Guidelines

Effective from 1 October 2023

REVIEW HISTORY

| Version | Date Reviewed | Date Endorsed | Content Reviewed/Purpose |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|
| One | 10 MAR 2015 | | Company name amended - CEO |
| Two | June 2023 | 29 September 2023 | WPA Governance, Risk and Integrity Committee, WPA CEO and WPA Climate Action Panel |

Guidelines to be next reviewed June 2025.

Acknowledgment of Country

Water Polo Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the ongoing connection to lands, waters, and communities. We pay our respects to the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to Elders past, present and emerging.

1. Purpose

These Guidelines are designed to provide guidance and recommendations to minimise the impact of weather-related events upon water polo participants and activity.

Water Polo Australia (WPA), the State Associations and affiliated Clubs and delivery providers (Clubs) have a responsibility to ensure that all water polo training, competitions and activity is conducted in a safe environment. The welfare of all participants is our primary concern.

WPA acknowledges the dangers of extreme weather to playing conditions and the safety of all participants and in line with the WPA Climate Action Strategy aims to ensure these Guidelines;

- Protect the health, safety and well-being of all participants in water polo activity
- Ensures venues are safe
- Provides clarity of process and risk mitigation strategies for water polo activity organisers.

A critical component of risk management for the sport includes how activity organisers prepare for and respond to adverse weather conditions, and how the water polo community is educated on how to conduct and enjoy the game in a way that is safe for all.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 These Guidelines are designed to be applicable to all training, competitions and events administered by WPA, State Associations and any affiliated clubs or delivery providers, however acknowledging that every situation and weather-event is unique and event organisers on the ground are best placed to assess the circumstances to most appropriately apply the recommendations (not rules) within these Guidelines.
- 2.2 WPA acknowledges that many water polo venues are operated by third parties who may not be bound by these Guidelines. **Ultimately these Guidelines should be used as a guide for participants in the absence of instruction from the relevant venue's personnel. Should venue personnel provide an instruction impacting upon water polo activity, their instruction would supersede these Guidelines until it is stood down/reversed.**
- 2.3 Participants should never be forced to participate in water polo activities in any circumstances. WPA respects the right of the individual to choose not to participate in a WPA sanctioned activity for whatever reason.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 For the purposes of these Guidelines the word Participant will encompass the following groups: players, spectators, volunteers, officials, coaches and any other persons participating in competitions or events.
- 3.2 Extreme weather may be defined as weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of temperature, water or air quality, rain, hail, lightning, wind chill, heat or extreme weather events.

4. Sun Safety

4.1 Sunscreen

- 4.1.1 World Aquatic's Water Polo Rule 2.5 currently states that:
"Players shall not have grease, oil or any substance on the body, which might provide an advantage. If a referee determines before the start of play that such a substance has been used, the referee shall order it to be removed immediately. The start of play shall not be delayed for the substance to be removed. If the offence is detected after play has started, the offending player shall be excluded from the remainder of the game and a substitute permitted to enter the field of play immediately from the team's exclusion re-entry area."
- 4.1.2 This rule is intended to prevent a player gaining an unfair advantage when being challenged for the ball during competition. It does not take into account, however, the greater importance of protecting the skin during extended exposure to the sun.
- 4.1.3 WPA permits non-greasy or non-oily sunscreens to be used as per the Manufacturer's recommendations/ instructions during competition and training and that World Aquatics WP Rule 2.5 not be enforced beyond what is reasonable for the protection and safety of participants.
- 4.1.4 WPA strongly advocates for the use of sunscreen brands that abide with clause 4.1.3 above and also align with the Reef Safe Standards to protect aquatic playing environments.

4.2 Sun Shades

- 4.2.1 Sun shades are required to the extent possible as part of the field of play setup for outdoor venues. This includes shading for the bench of both playing teams and the bench officials.
- 4.2.2 An exception may be applied in the case of moderate to high winds where there is a danger posed to any participant or spectator from the sun shade structure itself.

4.3 Reducing sun exposure

- 4.3.1 WPA strongly encourages sun safe measures at all water polo activity to reduce sun exposure as well as personal responsibility in sun protection practices.
- 4.3.2 WPA outdoor events require sun-protective clothing including wide-brim hats and long-sleeve shirts for appointed officials and recommends the use of such for all other participants on pool deck. Participants may refer to the WPA Inclusive Uniform Guidelines for sun-protective uniform alternatives.
- 4.3.3 Where possible, activities are to be conducted before 10.00am or after 3.00pm to avoid peak UV times during summer months.
- 4.3.4 Consideration is to be given to scheduling sufficient breaks every hour to allow officials and volunteers to take a break, rest and rehydrate.

5. Playing Conditions

5.1 Water Temperature

- 5.1.1 World Aquatics Rules states that the required temperature for official international water polo competition shall be 26°C plus 1°C or minus 1°C (25°C-27°C).
- 5.1.2 WPA acknowledges the wide variety of playing environments that may be used across Australia. Temperature controlled facilities for domestic activity may be plus 4°C or minus 1°C (25°C-30°C) of the World Aquatics rule.
- 5.1.3 Open water environments may not exceed a maximum water temperature of 31°C and a minimum of 16°C.
- 5.1.4 Should the water temperature fall below 20°C, suitable protective swimwear (including steamer wetsuits – please refer to WPA’s Inclusive Uniform Guidelines) is recommended.
- 5.1.5 If the water temperature is not within the above ranges at the time of commencement of the water polo activity, or changes at any time throughout, then the activity should be suspended until rectified or moved to an alternate venue.

5.2 Water Quality

- 5.2.1 Water quality can impact upon the safety of all participants and may be impacted by weather events and/or human activity, including bio and chemical agents.
- 5.2.2 In controlled-water playing environments water quality may be impacted by human activity including biological contaminants and/or misused chemical agents. In these instances, if there is concern regarding water quality it should be raised and managed with the facility manager. All activity should be suspended until the issue is rectified and deemed safe or moved to an alternate venue.
- 5.2.3 In open-water playing environment, high rainfall, flooding and run-off can increase bacterial, microbial, and chemical water content. Whilst participants may not be impacted by these factors during competition, gastrointestinal symptoms or illness may follow. Risk management plans should consider the following and should any risks be present all water polo activity should be suspended until the issue is rectified, mitigated where safe to do so or moved to an alternate venue;
 - Natural Hazards (e.g., Rips, Currents).
 - Environmental Factors (e.g., Air Temperature, Water Temperature, UV Radiation).
 - Microbial Quality (e.g., Bacterial, Viral or Protozoal pathogens).
 - Cyanobacterial Quality (e.g., Blue-green algae).
 - Hazardous Wildlife (e.g., Stingers, Eels, Fish).
 - Chemical and Aesthetic quality (e.g., Industrial Waste)

5.3 Air Quality

- 5.3.1 Any situation in which the air quality is compromised presents a risk to players, officials and spectators, especially if they have a pre-existing medical condition.
- 5.3.2 Airborne contaminants can come in many forms, but the most common are sand, dust or smoke.
- 5.3.3 Water Polo Australia follows the guidelines outlined by the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in relation to the Air Quality Index measurements for competing and training. To view the full guidelines, [click here](#)
- 5.3.4 If smoke is present it is recommended that the source is determined to the extent possible to ensure that the smoke is not toxic, not likely to worsen or is not due to a fire in the vicinity. If the smoke presents any danger, through reduction in visibility or ability to breathe properly, then play must be suspended and all patrons removed to safety.

5.4 Visibility

- 5.4.1 Low visibility can present a safety risk to all participants in and around a pool and water environment and may be caused by conditions such as smoke, fog, lighting, steam, heavy rain etc.
- 5.4.2 In the event of the threat of conditions resulting in low visibility forecasts should be monitored, and in particular the presence of a severe weather warning indicating conditions of low visibility
- 5.4.3 Should reduced visibility fall to less than 50 metres occur during a water polo activity the Referee or designated person will immediately cease the activity until rectified or moved to an alternate venue.

5.5 Submersible Hazards

- 5.5.1 It is important for any person entering the water to be aware of their surroundings and what is below the surface of the water that they are entering.
- 5.5.2 When entering the water participants should take note of the depth of the water they are entering, ensuring not to deep dive into shallow water to avoid risk of injury. It is recommended that entry into the water is by a shallow dive into a deep body of water or lowering/walking into the water in shallow or progressive depths.
- 5.5.3 In open water settings, participants should be aware of potential submerged objects, the ground surface or potential animals or biodiversity that may share the playing environment. Seaweed, moss, stingrays, fish, jellyfish, bluebottles, submerged rocks and shells, floating waste may be some of the hazard in and below the water that participants should take care of avoiding or supporting the event organiser in removing before and during the commencement of play.
- 5.5.4 Coaches, Referees and Event Organisers should always undertake an ongoing risk assessment of the playing environment for continual changes in the playing environment that may need to be responded to throughout the duration of the activity.

6. Extreme Weather

For all considerations relating to weather events WPA recommends the Bureau of Meteorology's website - www.bom.gov.au. Follow the link to: your state, then to: Observations, then: Thermal Comfort. In the event that readings are not available at the exact location of an activity, the BOM site will provide local temperature and humidity readings.

It is acknowledged that children are at greater risk of heat and cold exposure than adults because their thermoregulation mechanisms are not fully developed (particularly high temperatures combined with high humidity levels). Similarly, older participants can also be at high risk because of reduced cardiac function. Highly trained athletes have improved thermoregulatory capacity, particularly if fully acclimatized. In addition, depending on the disability, some athletes are unable to thermoregulate.

Individual circumstances and environmental conditions should be considered on each occasion.

6.1 Storms - Lightning and Thunder

- 6.1.1 Lightning poses a real risk of death or serious injury to individuals undertaking outdoor activities, and this risk is increased when participants are on the water. Storms involving thunder should consider the potential presence of lightning even if the lightning can not be seen by the naked eye.
- 6.1.2 WPA will first and foremost follow all lighting protocols of the venue. Venue Staff will determine when play must be stopped and when it can resume.
- 6.1.3 If there is no lightning protocol in place at the venue, the following steps will occur:
 - If the time between seeing the lightning flash and hearing the thunder is less than 30 seconds, then all activities should stop immediately as the lightning is within 10km.
 - Referees must signal the players to exit the pool immediately and seek safety under appropriate shelter (such as in a solid building or totally enclosed car). Do not seek shelter under a tree (or group of trees) in the open or in small open structures such as picnic shelters.
 - Game play must not resume until a minimum of 30 minutes has passed since the last sound of thunder. If a lightning flash occurs again within the 30 minutes, the evacuation clock restarts following the last flash of lightning.
 - In the instance where no venue staff are present, the Pool Controller will stop play and notify the Event Organiser or their designated representative as soon as possible.
- 6.1.4 All play or activity must immediately cease if there is hail. All persons should seek immediate cover.

6.2 High Wind

- 6.2.1 High or strong winds present a safety risk to all participants in and around the pool environment

- 6.2.2 Prior to and during training, competition or events, the BOM weather forecast should be monitored, and in particular the presence of a severe weather warning indicating strong winds
- 6.2.3 Examples of windy conditions which create an unacceptable risk and where play maybe suspended:
- Foreign objects being disturbed, blown around or into the water;
 - Field of play, fences or equipment being moved or damaged; and/or
 - Player health being affected by the force of the wind.
- 6.2.4 If a severe weather warning is in effect or if strong winds are predicted, cancelling or postponing the activity should be strongly considered
- 6.2.5 In the event that strong winds occurs during an activity, the following action will be taken to the extent possible:
- The Referee or designated person will ask all participants to immediately leave the pool or competition/training area and proceed inside a substantial building such as an office block, school or house
 - It should be noted that small outdoor buildings, rain shelters and sheds are not considered substantial buildings and are not deemed to be a safe area to shelter
 - In the event that a substantial building is not available for shelter, a hard- topped metal vehicle with windows closed may also provide good protection
 - Evacuation from the area to a safe location will be coordinated through PA announcements where available
 - Individuals should shelter inside away from windows until the threat has passed
 - Once strong winds have ceased, the Referee or designated person will assess the pool area for damage before determining whether competition, training or the event should resume.
 - No individuals will be permitted to return to the pool or competition / training area until explicit clearance is given by the Referee or designated person.

6.3 Extreme Heat, Humidity and Cold

- 6.3.1 Intense activity in extreme heat or high humidity places some people at greater risk of heat illness. If untreated, heat illness can lead to the more serious and potentially life-threatening conditions, including heat stroke.
- 6.3.2 Both ambient air temperature and humidity are relevant when considering the impacts upon participants.
- 6.3.3 Ambient temperature is the most easily understood guide available, and is most useful on hot, dry days. The Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) is also recognised standard to understand humidity and is useful when humidity is high and when factoring in wind chill, particularly for players coming out of the water, wet and sitting on the bench during play.
- 6.3.4 The following conditions require assessment and potential application of risk mitigation strategies to reduce risk of illness to participants;

| Risk of Temperature related Illness | Ambient Air Temperature | Relative Humidity | WBGT | Recommended Actions |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------|---|
| Moderate-High | <15°C | NA | <10 | Encourage use of approved wetsuits, limit time on bench or permit the bench to remain in the water out of the field of play |
| Low-Moderate | 16-20°C | NA | 11-15 | Monitor and encourage use additional clothing/towels when out of the water |
| Low-Moderate | 21-25°C | Exceeds 70% | 16--20 | Monitor and encourage breaks/rest/ hydration etc |
| Moderate-High | 26-30°C | Exceeds 60% | 21-25 | Proceed with caution - implement additional breaks, shade, hydration access etc |
| High-Very High | 31-35°C | Exceeds 50% | 26-29 | Consider Postponement or relocation and above |
| Extreme | 36°C and above | Exceeds 30% | 30 and above | Postponement or relocation recommended |

- 6.3.5 The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) produces ambient and WBGT readings for many locations in Australia. You can check these readings and a guide for the relative risk for your location at www.bom.gov.au/info/thermal_stress/index.shtml
- 6.3.6 For indoor venues, it is important to consider the internal temperature and work with venues on their heat management strategies and controls throughout any activity.
- 6.3.7 For outdoor venues, it is important to watch for 'Heatwave' conditions or variations from the average temperature for the time of year. This is one situation where there may be a greater danger of heat illness.
- 6.3.8 For all venues it is important to balance the changes upon the body when wet players are frequently moving between the water and sitting on the bench and may require a combination of the recommended actions above to care for participants.

7. Weather Events

7.1 Bushfires

- 7.1.1 Bushfires and grassfires are common throughout Australia. The nature of these fires can be unpredictable and fast moving.
- 7.1.2 WPA recommends activities should be cancelled or postponed if the advice in the area is "watch and act" or higher.

- 7.1.3 Please refer to your relevant State Government body for up-to-date information regarding the status of individual fires and bushfire risks in specific areas.
- 7.1.4 If the advice is increased to “Emergency” then all activities must stop immediately, and all participants must follow the instructions of emergency personnel in the area.

7.2 Flooding

- 7.2.1 Flooding may pose risks to venues as well as accessibility of participants.
- 7.2.2 In the event that access to the venue is restricted by flooding, or at risk of being so, the activity should be postponed, cancelled and or moved to an alternate venue.

8. Procedures

- 8.1 These guidelines are provided to support decision making prior to and during water polo activity as part of an activity organisers risk management protocols and liability assessments. Individual responsibility for self-care is expected at all times by water polo participants.
- 8.2 When conditions are forecast for extreme weather, or the weather begins to deteriorate conditions are to be monitored at least every hour.
- 8.3 When extreme conditions are forecast, the Competition Manager should ensure that all Participants are aware of the process for assessment of conditions and how any decisions will be communicated.
- 8.4 If an activity is suspended, the Competition Manager or their delegate must ensure firstly that all Participants involved are promptly made aware of the decision and secondly that they are made aware of the process in place to make subsequent decisions around resumption or cancellation. This will allow participants to make informed decisions around what they should be doing during any break in the activity.
- 8.5 The Competition Manager or their delegate should keep timely records of the processes undertaken to reach decisions and the outcomes arrived at.
- 8.6 The Competition Manager or their delegate is responsible for ensuring that the Risk Management Plan for the activity is up to date in advance of the holding of the activity.
- 8.7 The Competition Manager or their delegate is responsible for ensuring that there are appropriate measures in place to mitigate the risks of extreme weather or conditions, such as the provision of shade or sunscreen, and access to water.
- 8.8 The Competition Manager should liaise with the Referees and Technical Delegates regarding any decisions to cancel or postpone competition.
- 8.9 The Competition Manager has the power to cancel or postpone an activity on account of the weather conditions and participant safety.

8.10 WPA reserves the right to cancel any competition at its absolute discretion if it is deemed that the environmental conditions present a serious health risk to Participants, even if conditions fall within the acceptable levels detailed within these Guidelines.

8.11 WPA reserves the right to amend these Guidelines from time to time and without notice, such that amendments will be binding and effective immediately for conduct and circumstances occurring post amendments.

8.12 For questions relating to these Guidelines please contact info@waterpoloaustralia.com.au

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