

# QUEENSLAND MASTERS ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION INC

## ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

Queensland Masters Athletics Inc (QMA) recognises that adverse weather conditions may have a detrimental effect on those involved in competition and in extreme cases may cause them significant harm.

### POLICY

Note: this QMA policy applies separately to each of Athletics North Queensland and QMA regions to the maximum extent possible.

QMA will ensure to the best of its ability that adverse weather conditions such as heat, rain, wind and lightning do not result in injury or serious harm to competitors or any official/volunteer involved in running a competition. This will take the form of considering a stop to:

- competition or particular events if the Heat Index is in excess of 40 degrees Celsius and so presents a danger of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- all competition when lightning approaches until 30 minutes after the last lightning strike is observed.
- particular events when rain makes the conduct of that event hazardous to competitors.
- all competition when hail is of a size that presents a danger to competitors and officials.

### INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

As athletics is an individual sport it is QMA's policy to encourage all athletes to take a sensible approach to training and competition in adverse weather. There may be circumstances where QMA will mandate that general competition or particular events may not continue, however, at all other times the decision to participate or not in competition is still one that each athlete and official must make.

Where:

- the Heat Index is at a level where cessation of endurance events or the entire competition itself is being considered
- the competition is at a National or State level
- competitors have travelled from inter-State or remote parts of Queensland
- there is no possibility of re-scheduling the affected events

competitors will be advised of the Heat Index value and its significance in terms of heat stress. Competitors will then be asked to make an individual decision on whether they will continue or not.

It is also the responsibility of the individual to do all they can to minimise the effects of adverse weather on themselves. In the case of hot weather, for example, those involved in competition should ensure that their clothing and headwear is appropriate, that they have ensured their hydration levels are adequate and that they have acclimatised to the exertion levels required in the prevailing conditions. Specific hot weather precautions are detailed at the end of this policy.

## PROCEDURES

### 1. Hot Weather:

All summer competition will, whenever possible, be conducted to avoid the heat of the day. Further, as sprint event competitors are less affected by heat than those in endurance races, longer races will where possible be scheduled at the beginning **or** end of the meeting when temperatures may be lower.

High temperatures or moderate temperatures and high humidity increase the risk of injury from heat stress. The body adapts to heat by sweating and the cooling effect of evaporation. Despite enormous amounts of sweat when exercising in hot weather, heat does not leave the body easily. This causes the body temperature to rise and there is a danger of dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

As humidity rises the cooling effect of sweating is reduced because the sweat cannot evaporate as fast and the apparent temperature or “Heat Index” (what the combination of humidity and temperature make it feel like) increases.

A Heat Index monitor will be used at all events conducted by QMA and will be located in the relevant Control Room. The remote sensor will be placed near the track in a position of full shade. It will ideally be situated about one metre above the ground and away from any source of radiant heat such as a brick wall or solid metal fence. The officials stationed in the Control Room will be responsible for monitoring the Heat Index and will advise the Competition Director when the Heat Index rises to any of the levels in the following table.

Heat Index Warning Ranges	QMA Guideline
40°C or higher	Consider cancellation or postponement of all competition events
33 - 40°C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider cancellation or postponement of endurance running events of two kilometres or greater.</li> <li>• Have cold water and ice available to all groups of officials and athletes competing in ongoing events.</li> <li>• Periodic announcements of the need for competitors to keep hydrated and take other measures to reduce heat stress.</li> <li>• Rotate officials in the field to duties out of the sun.</li> </ul>
26 - 33°C	Be alert to individuals exhibiting signs of not coping with the heat conditions.
25°C and below	Low risk of heat stress in normal circumstances

The Competition Director will ensure that:

- water is available for competitors and officials
- adequate shade is provided for competitors awaiting their turn to compete and for officials performing judging and recording functions.

- Officials in the field are rotated to duties out of the sun
- Water/soft drinks are provided on a regular basis to field officials

## **2. Lightning:**

The Competition Director will be responsible for:

- Monitoring any lightning activity in the vicinity of the competition area
- Suspending competition where the lag between the observed lightning flash and the corresponding thunder clap is fifteen seconds or less
- Recommencing competition only after 30 minutes have elapsed after the last observed lightning flash in the area.

## **3. Rain / Hail:**

The Competition Director will ensure that the officials at all events monitor the degree of rainfall and its affect on the ability of competitors to safely undertake the event.

For running and jumping events the danger of a competitor losing their footing and sustaining an injury must be closely watched. Where conditions are slippery, competitors without spikes appropriate for the event should be encouraged to pass their jumps while the dangerous conditions persist. Events such as the pole vault rely on the competitor being able to tightly grasp the pole. If the intensity of rainfall is such that an adequate grip cannot be maintained, the event will be suspended. The suspension of any event will be made by the Competition Director on advice from the official in charge of the particular event.

For throwing events, the state of the circle must be sufficient to maintain the competitors footing bearing in mind that a wet circle is not necessarily a danger. Where, however, the level of water increases to the stage where the competitor's feet aquaplane and the rain is so heavy that the throwing rings cannot be kept clear of water, the event will be suspended. The suspension of any event will be made by the Competition Director on advice from the official in charge of the particular event.

The incidence of hail may be dangerous depending on the size of the hail stones. The Competition Director will suspend competition until the hail storm has passed.

## **4. Wind:**

While wind is not normally a danger, high winds or very gusty conditions may cause some competitors to lose their balance and risk injury. Again, events like the pole vault are more susceptible to wind gusts and need to be closely monitored. The suspension of any event will be made by the Competition Director on advice from the official in charge of the particular event.

## **GENERAL HOT WEATHER PRECAUTIONS**

In addition to our competition policy QMA recommends the following to all athletes training and competing in hot weather and these recommendations apply whatever the time of year.

### **1. Drink lots of liquids.**

Drinking plenty of fluids before exercise will improve cardiovascular function and body temperature regulation during exercise when it is impossible to drink enough. The body absorbs fluid at less than the rate it sweats it out during hard exercise. The objective is to minimize the loss by taking in plenty of fluids before and during activity. Drinking fluids should ideally begin in the 24 hours prior to the event. Do not rely on thirst as an indicator of need – by the time you are thirsty it is already too late! As recommended by Sports Medicine Australia, (the club) advises members to drink at least 500mls of fluid before activity and 200mls for every 15 minutes of activity. Sports drinks with electrolytes will assist in retaining more fluid and cool water is absorbed more rapidly than warm water. Finally, re-hydrate after exercise (at least 500mls).

### **2. Acclimatise to hot weather exercise.**

If competition in hot weather is expected then a period of 7-10 days gradual acclimatization will facilitate adaptation and assist in performance and resistance to heat stress.

Practice drinking before training to ensure you are accustomed to the feeling; otherwise it could lead to gastrointestinal discomfort during a race.

### **3. Race to your fitness level.**

The less conditioned, those carrying a little more weight than desirable, asthmatics, diabetics, females and older athletes will generally be more susceptible to heat stress. In hot weather only race to your personal level of fitness; never over-exert yourself.

### **4. Slip-Slop-Slap**

Be sun-smart. Cover up, use sunscreen and slap on hats and sunglasses.

**This version adopted as a policy of Queensland Masters Athletics Association Inc.**

**Date: April 2013**