



Participant Safety & Reducing Risk Guidelines

These Guidelines are not viewed as official Policy or Operational Procedures of Ontario Soccer but rather are various guidelines outlining the position of Ontario Soccer on different topics in Soccer that may not be addressed throughout the Association's Policies and Procedures. This Document will be updated accordingly by Ontario Soccer staff where deemed appropriate to uphold the position of the Association.

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Play. Inspire. Unite.



LIGHTNING SAFETY/SEVERE WEATHER

When thunder roars, go indoors!

The safety of players, coaches, management and spectators is the primary concern in any weather event that occurs during all matches sanctioned by Ontario Soccer and Canada Soccer. By understanding and following the below information, the safety of everyone shall be greatly increased. Ultimately, the Match Official has the final say over delaying or restarting a match due to weather. Waiting to stop play or not waiting to start play may result in a serious injury or loss of life. Match Officials are expected to act responsibly when dealing with such events during matches they are controlling

If you can hear thunder, you can get hit by lightning. As soon as you hear thunder, quickly get to a safe location. More people are struck before and after a thunderstorm than during one. Stay inside for 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder.

Additional Information

Please note the following recommendations from Environment Canada:

Source: <https://weather.gc.ca/lightning/>

- **To plan for a safe day, check the weather forecast first.** If thunderstorms are forecast, avoid being outdoors at that time or make an alternate plan. Identify safe places and determine how long it will take you to reach them.
- **Watch the skies for developing thunderstorms and listen for thunder.** As soon as you hear thunder, quickly get to a safe location. If you can hear thunder, you are in danger of being hit by lightning. More people are struck before and after a thunderstorm than during one.
- **Get to a safe place.** A safe location is a fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning. If no sturdy building is close by, get into a metal-roofed vehicle and close all the windows.
- **Do not handle electrical equipment, telephones or plumbing.** These are all electrical conductors. Using a computer or wired video game system, taking a bath or touching a metal window frame all put you at risk of being struck by lightning. Use battery-operated appliances only.
- **If caught outdoors far from shelter, stay away from tall objects.** This includes trees, poles, wires and fences. Take shelter in a low-lying area but be on the alert for possible flooding.

Be aware of how close lightning is occurring. Thunder always accompanies lightning, even though its audible range can be diminished due to background noise in the immediate environment and its distance from the observer.

When larger groups are involved, the time needed to properly evacuate an area increases. As time requirements change, the distance at which lightning is noted and considered a threat to move into the area must be increased.

Know where the closest “safe structure or location” is to the field or playing area and know how long it takes to get to that safe structure or location. Safe structure or location is defined as:



- Any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e., a building with plumbing and/or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure. Avoid using shower facilities for safe shelter and do not use the showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm.

In the absence of a sturdy, frequently inhabited building, any vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled-up windows can provide a measure of safety. A vehicle is certainly better than remaining outdoors. It is not the rubber tires that make a vehicle a safe shelter, but the hard metal roof which dissipates the lightning strike around the vehicle. Do not touch the sides of any vehicle.

If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize contact with the ground because lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. Minimize your body's surface area and the ground. Do not lie flat. If unable to reach safe shelter, stay away from the tallest trees or objects such as light poles or flag poles), metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the highest object in a field. Do not take shelter under a single, tall tree. Avoid using the telephone, except in emergency situations. People have been struck by lightning while using a land-line telephone. A cellular phone or a portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land-line phones, if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.

When considering resumption of any athletics activity, wait at least thirty (30) minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field.

First aid for lightning victims

Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.

- **Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and can be safely handled.**
- **Call for help.** Victims may be suffering from burns or shock and should receive medical attention immediately. Call 9-1-1 or your local ambulance service.
- **Give first aid.** If breathing has stopped, administer cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Use an automatic external defibrillator if one is available.



HEAT RELATED INJURY PREVENTION

Proper Hydration to Avoid and prevent heat related injuries when playing soccer

There are some simple guidelines which have been prepared by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) when it comes to running activities in a hot and/or humid environment. The goal in participating in hot weather is to avoid fluid loss from the body or dehydration. Water not only accounts for some 98% of our body composition, but functions to help deliver oxygen to working muscles, and keeps the body from overheating during strenuous activity. Hard working muscles generate heat which is dissipated through the act of sweating. Evaporation of sweat on the skin allows the body to get rid of this heat and cool it off. In looking at the objectives for advising officials and participates about this subject it seems that the following categories are areas requiring attention:

1. To educate athletes and event officials about the most common forms of environmental illness including predisposing conditions, warning signs, susceptibility and incidence reduction.
2. To advise officials of their legal responsibilities and potential liability with regard to event safety and injury prevention
3. To recommend that officials consult local weather archives and plan games at times likely to be of low environmental stress to minimize detrimental effects on athletes.
4. To encourage officials to warn athletes about environmental stress on game/practice day and the implications for heat and cold illness.
5. To inform officials of preventive actions that may reduce debilitation and environmental illness.
6. To describe the personnel, equipment, and supplies necessary to reduce and treat cases of collapse and environmental illness.

To this end, after review of the available literature and after consultation of various medical authorities and officials it was felt that the following recommendations are some key guidelines for soccer participation in the heat:

1. Avoid dehydration and make sure you pre-hydrate: Don't wait till you feel thirsty because the body will not be able to tell you in time that you are dehydrated, here are some practical recommendations:

- 2 hours before exercise, drink at least 16 oz or 500 ml (an average bottle of water)
- 1 hour before exercise, drink at least 8 oz or 250 ml (half an average bottle of water)
- During the exercise, drink at least 4 to 8 oz every 15 - 20 minutes
- Immediately after the exercise, drink at least 16 oz or 500 ml of water or an electrolyte replacing drink
- 1 hour after a training session or game consider drinking 16 oz or 500 ml of skim milk or chocolate milk for protein and muscle repair



2. As a rule of thumb you should drink at least 500 ml for every 20 lbs of body weight, therefore, someone weighing 140 lbs needs to drink at least 3500 ml of fluid per day if training or playing that day.
3. Drinking carbohydrate and electrolyte fluids may be beneficial in avoiding heat trauma.
4. Wearing light breathable clothing is advised.
5. Officials should be very cautious in authorizing games and practices in environments where the temperature plus humidity combined are 35 C and over. They should inquire of the participants to ensure pre-event hydration, medication use and susceptibility to heat injury (prior occurrence). Also unlimited substitution is recommended during games as is frequent fluid breaks and fluid availability on both sides of the field.
6. Warning flags could be posted on the field as follows:
 - **green** - proceed with caution heat stress possible
 - **amber** - moderate risk to heat stress
 - **red** - high risk to potential heat stress

If used they should be posted at locations easily seen by participants, support staff, medical staff and spectators.

The other issue to consider is, and you may be asking yourself at this point, what are the risk factors which could predispose a soccer player to heat injury. Listed below are the major risk factors but this is by no means an exhaustive list:

1. Not being acclimatized
2. Unfit
3. Hypo hydration
4. Hyper hydration
5. Use of a variety of medications or supplements
6. Persons with persistent, disabling mental illness
7. Certain medical conditions (cardiac, lung)

How can you tell if one of your soccer players is experiencing heat injury? Below is a list of the early warning signs to look for and again this is not an exhaustive list:

1. Flushed face
2. Hyperventilation or shortness of breath
3. Headache
4. Dizziness
5. Tingling arms
6. Goose bumps (hair on arms standing on end)
7. Chilliness
8. Poor coordination
9. Confusion, agitation, uncooperativeness



A preseason or pre-event conditioning program, when combined with an 8 - 14 day period of acclimatization, may further reduce the risk of heat injury.

There are 3 main types of heat injury identified in the medical literature:

1. Heat Cramps - these are the mildest form of heat trauma and are commonly related to low body sodium and chloride levels.

Signs & Symptoms include - weakness, muscle cramps, collapse with low blood pressure.

Treatment - is aimed at replacing the salt loss and can be oral or by intravenous if vomiting is a problem. Having athletes put a little extra salt on their food the day before and day of game can be a helpful way to avoid this condition.

2. Heat Exhaustion - this is a more severe medical event as follows.

Signs & Symptoms include - weakness, irritability, collapse, unable to sweat adequately to promote body cooling, may proceed in the more ominous heat stroke and a fine rash is often present.

Treatment - remove athlete to a cooler environment, use ice baths, fans.

3. Heat Stroke - THIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY - it is due to a failure of the heat-controlling mechanism. It may occur merely as a result of exposure to heat.

Signs & Symptoms include - mental confusion, headache, poor coordination, delirium, convulsions and death. The body temperature may be 106 F or 40.5 C or higher, the skin is usually hot and dry as the sweating mechanism has failed.

Treatment - Call 911 and transport to a local Hospital. Rapid cooling is the goal using wet towels, spray mist, sponge baths and removal from the heat. This condition could cause the athlete to go into shock and coma may follow so immediate medical attention is required.

Reference: American College of Sports Medicine POSITION STAND. Exercise and Fluid

Replacement, Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, 2007

Acknowledgements: Dr. Rudy Gittens

Past Medical Director, Canada Soccer



PREGNANCY – PLAYING WHILE PREGNANT

Ontario Soccer is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment for all participants. Soccer is a physical activity to which you acknowledge when you sign the Ontario Soccer Registration form and waiver. Ontario Soccer advises that players who are pregnant and wanting to continue to play soccer throughout their pregnancy, should consult a physician before engaging in the sport.

As long as players are aware of the risks involved, the decision to play is entirely theirs.

A Player should:

- Be aware that their health and that of their unborn child is of the utmost importance
- Seek expert medical advice associated to playing while pregnant
- Use common sense and do not take unnecessary risks

Clubs and Leagues should:

- Do their due diligence in providing a safe and enjoyable playing environment for all
- Apply all policies, procedures and rules equally
- Consider and maintain the privacy of the pregnant participant
- Seek advice where necessary from a higher governing organization if there are any items of uncertainty



CASTS & EQUIPMENT

Casts

Hard plaster casts are considered to pose a danger to both the wearer and other players and are not permitted to be worn. The practice of padding a hard plaster cast does not reduce the element of danger.

Players wearing a soft, lightweight, cast will be permitted to play if the cast does not present a danger to the individual or any other player. Such determination will be made by the Match Officials.

Any player who uses a cast to intimidate or injure an opponent shall be cautioned or sent off depending on the nature of the player's action.

Other Equipment

Orthopaedic Supports (ie. Knee Braces)

FIFA states that the vast majority of commercially manufactured supports are safe to use. Knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight padded material are not considered dangerous. The major concern is not the 'hardness' of the equipment alone, rather that any part of it can cut or wound another player. Any support must be safe for all players, and adequately padded and covered if necessary.

Prosthetics

A player wearing a prosthetic device should be allowed to play providing the basic principles of Law 4 are met.

Wearing Glasses

Eyeglasses are allowed if they are sports spectacles and are safe for the players themselves and for other players. Match Officials should show tolerance when authorizing their use, particularly for younger players. Materials such as metal or glass are not acceptable. In recreational and house league games Match Officials are expected to show common sense and allow spectacles as long as the basic principles of Law 4 are met.



JEWELLERY AND HEAD COVERS

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous.

All items of jewellery (necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, leather bands, rubber bands, etc.) are forbidden and must be removed. Using tape to cover jewellery is not permitted.

The players must be inspected before the start of the match and substitutes before they enter the field of play. If a player is wearing or using unauthorised/dangerous equipment of jewellery the referee must order the player to:

- Remove the item
- Leave the field of play at the next stoppage if the player is unable or unwilling to comply.

A player who refuses to comply or wears the item again must be cautioned.

Head Covers

Where head covers (excluding goalkeeper's caps) are worn, they must:

- Be of same colour as the jersey or black (all players should match)
- Be in keeping with the professional appearance of the players equipment
- Not be attached to the jersey
- Not pose any danger to the player wearing it or any other player (e.g. opening/closing mechanism around neck)
- Not have any part(s) extending out from the surface (protruding elements)
- Wearing of turbans/patkas/keski are permitted
- The head covering must be safe and must not pose danger to the wearer or other participants.



MEDIA AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Video Recording

Ontario Soccer permits video recording of soccer games provided the use of the recording is not used for commercial gains. Filming soccer games (any competition associated to Ontario Soccer) for commercial gain, requires the written approval of all participants. *The permission of the opposing team or league is not required.*

Ontario Soccer permits sanctioned leagues to have the authority to have their own privacy policy and its own rules regarding the video recording of games. Limitations in this regard should be applied consistently, however enforcement of such a limitation in a public facility is at the discretion of the league.

Photography

Ontario Soccer permits sanctioned leagues to have the authority to have their own privacy policy and its own rules regarding the photography of games. Limitations in this regard should be applied consistently, however enforcement of such a limitation in a public facility is at the discretion of the league.

Drones

(Definition) Drone – An unmanned mechanical aircraft that can navigate autonomously, with or without human control.


Ontario Soccer recognizes the developing use of drones for recreation and for practical uses including the recording of practices, games, and competition. However, at this time Ontario Soccer prohibits the use of drones at all practices, games, competitions, and other Ontario Soccer sanctioned events. Ontario Soccer has developed and takes this position to pre-emptively limit the use of Drones until broader safety regulations regarding drones have been more widely adopted.

Ontario Soccer pledges to remain attentive to ongoing developments regarding the use of drones in other sports for training and observation purposes, and to be aware of updated safety regulations for drones in Ontario air space and in recreational parks and fields.

For any questions regarding this document please contact ask@ontariosoccer.net



ONTARIO SOCCER
7601 Martin Grove Road, Vaughan ON L4L 9E4
905.264.9390 • ontariosoccer.net

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