

POLICY	Governance
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1. INTRODUCTION

Paddle Australia (PA), its State Paddle Associations (SPA's) and Affiliated Clubs (Clubs) have a responsibility to ensure that all of their paddling competitions and events are conducted in a safe environment. The welfare of all participants must be the foremost concern for Event Organisers and Host Organising Committees and the way in which Event Organisers prepare for and respond to adverse weather and other conditions is a critical component of risk management.

There is also a wider responsibility for the SPA's and PA to inform and educate the Australian paddling community of the risks associated with our sport and how to make sure that participation in paddling activities is safe as well as fun. Exercising in extreme weather or other conditions can cause extra demands on the body, while prolonged exposure to extreme conditions, even for those not actively paddling, can present similar risks. The dangers of high intensity exercise in such environments can be harmful and even fatal.

These Guidelines have been developed to assist in the regulation of PA Competitions, PA and SPA Sanctioned Events and Club Activities and also to provide information and guidance to the whole paddling community in coming to an informed decision as to whether to modify, postpone or cancel paddling activities.

2. SCOPE

These Guidelines are applicable to all competitions and events administered by PA and SPA's or conducted on their behalf. It may be adopted, with or without amendment, by any affiliated clubs or Paddling Organisations.

For the purposes of these guidelines the word Participant will encompass the following groups: members, spectators, volunteers, officials, coaches and any other persons participating in competitions or events.

3. INTENDED USE

There is a recognition that it is not possible to set down a black and white set of benchmarks at which point events must be modified. This is because of the diverse nature of paddling activities and the varied nature of the environments in which they take place. As an example, conditions which may be appropriate for a slalom race, which requires maximal exertion for a short period of time, may be inappropriate for a marathon race which requires sustained exertion over multiple hours. Similarly, children or older participants may have different requirements to high performance athletes. Also, consideration must be given to the fact that while competitors may be exposed to extreme weather conditions for a limited period, officials and/or volunteers may have a different period of exposure. The Host Organising Committee have a duty of care to monitor environmental conditions and minimise risk for all Participants involved in a PA event.

While agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology, Sports Medicine Australia and the Australian Institute of Sport are able to provide data and guidelines to assist in the decision- making process, these must be weighed against information specific to the location and nature of the activity.

The BOM provides numerous local readings around Australia; however, there may be no reading available for the exact location of an event. Similarly, information provided by such third parties may

not be current. In assessing Air Quality, for example, there is typically a time lag of more than one hour to the availability of the recent readings. Accordingly, external data must be taken into consideration along with 'on the ground' observations of conditions and relevant factors.

These Guidelines outline the factors to be considered by the Host Organising Committee and, ultimately, all Participants involved in the event. While the Host Organising Committee may choose to alter or cancel activities, should a decision be made for a competition to continue regardless of Extreme Weather and associated conditions, Participants should never be forced to participate in paddling activities in any circumstances. PA respects the right of the individual to choose not to participate in a PA sanctioned activity for whatever reason.

4. DEFINITIONS

In this Policy, the following words have the following respective meanings:

- “Athlete”** means a person who has notified PA in accordance with this Policy that he/she wishes to be considered to participate in a National Canoeing Competition.
- “Board”** means the PA Board of Directors.
- “Class”** means the category of events within a Discipline in each gender. For example, within the Discipline of Slalom the classes include Men’s C1, Women’s K1.
- “Competition Committee”** The Competition Committee has been established as a Board Committee under the PA Committee Structure Policy. The Competitions Committee exists to provide a forum for planning and coordination designed to ensure that paddling competitions throughout Australia increase in popularity amongst paddlers, coaches, volunteers, officials, the media, and the general public.
- “Competition Manager”** as appointed by the Host Organising Committee, the Competition Manager is responsible for the operational delivery and coordination of the event in consultation with the Host Organising Committee.
- “Competition Rules”** means the rules and regulations applicable to a Competition in accordance with Rule 3.1 of this Policy and includes this Policy, the PA Anti-Doping Policy and the PA Member Protection Policy.
- “Discipline”** means the canoeing disciplines of Canoe Marathon, Canoe Polo, Canoe Slalom, Canoe Sprint, Freestyle, Ocean Racing, SUP, Canoe Wildwater.
- “Extreme Weather”** extreme weather or extreme climate events include unexpected, unusual, severe, or unseasonal weather at the extremes of historical distribution.

**“Host Organising
Committee”**

The Host Organising Committee (HOC), as established by the respective Discipline Technical Committee, is responsible for the delivery and organisation of The Event.

“CEO”

means the Chief Executive Officer of PA or their nominee from time to time.

“ICF”

means the International Canoe Federation.

“Individual Member”

means a registered financial individual member of a State Association or Affiliated Club.

“Safety Officer”

as appointed by the Host Organising Committee. The Safety officer is responsible for ensuring that the event is safe and compliant with local legislation and current safety advice as provided by PA and/or the relevant SPA.

Words not defined in this Policy have the meaning ascribed to them in the Constitution of the PA unless a contrary meaning appears from the context.

5. EXTREME TEMPERATURE

For up-to-date temperature and humidity readings, the Host Organising Committee should utilise weather monitoring equipment at the competition venue where possible. Alternatively, Participants are encouraged to refer to the Bureau of Meteorology’s website - www.bom.gov.au. Then 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.

The Host Organising Committee and participants should understand 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 acclimatised. In addition, depending on the disability, some Para athletes are unable to thermoregulate.

5.1 TEMPERATURE INDEX

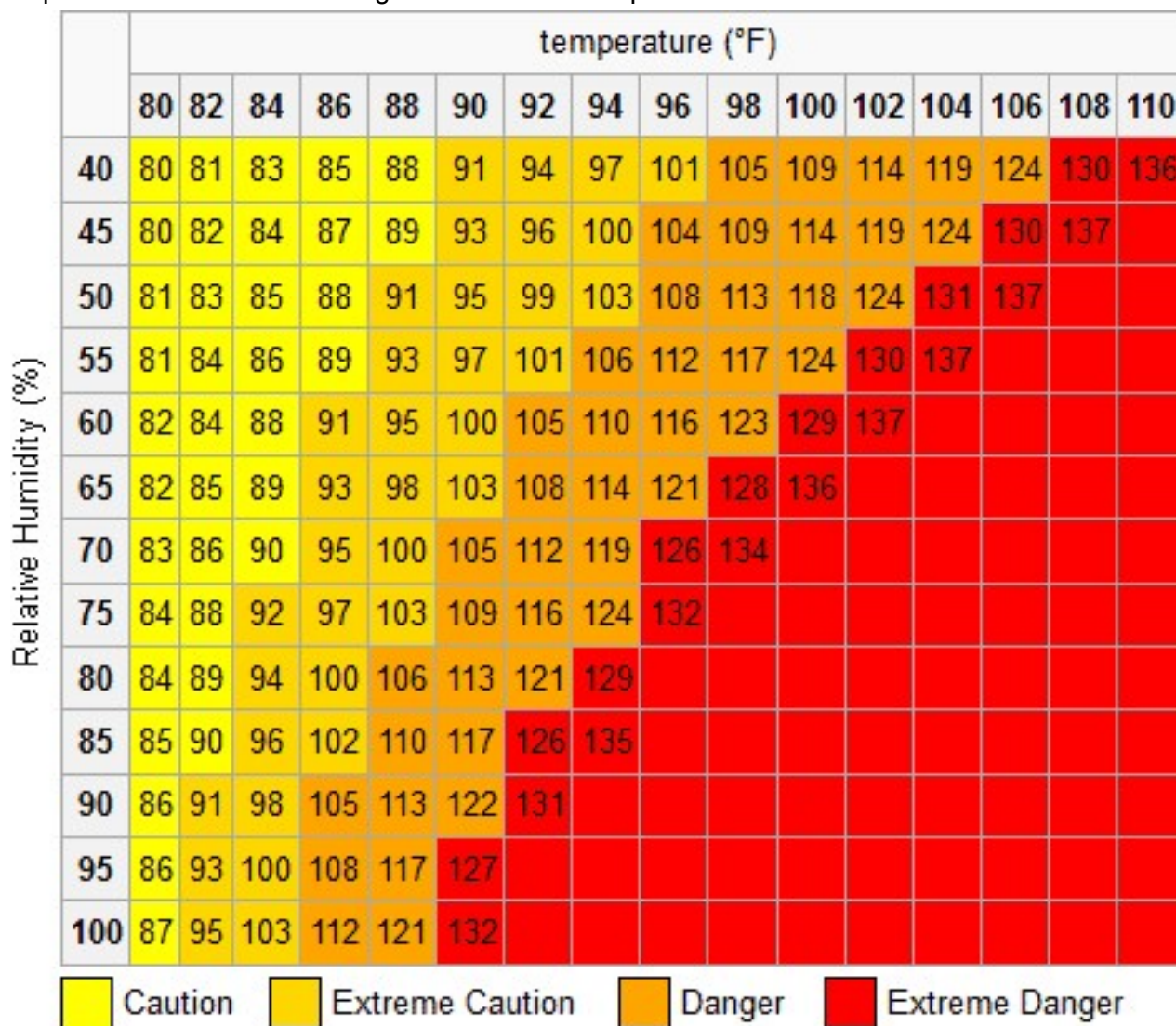
As well as temperature, humidity is an important consideration in determining whether to amend or cancel a paddling activity. A Heat Index is used as a means of incorporating both temperature and humidity to give a single figure to be used in assessing conditions.

The Heat Index shall be determined from the Heat Index Table. In using the Heat Index Table provided below, Ambient Temperature and Relative Humidity should be measured directly at each competition venue, in the shade (out of direct sunlight). Relative Humidity can be determined by using a digital thermometer/ hygrometer that can be purchased at electronic stores at a reasonably low cost.

For example, if the Temperature is 35°C and the Relative Humidity is 40%, the Heat Index is a value of 39. If the Temperature is 35°C and the Relative Humidity is 60%, the Heat Index is a value of 42.

In contrast, in instances of Paddling participants are at risk of Hypothermia when training and competing in cold weather. This risk is amplified in instances when the weather is also windy and/ or wet. In mitigating the risks associated with participating in paddling in cold weather, the Host Organising Committee is encouraged to consider the safety of officials and volunteers in ensuring they are sheltered from weather, which is cold, wet or windy. This could include providing shelter, encouraging volunteers and officials to bring appropriate clothing, opportunities to change into dry clothes and regular changes to postings where officials and volunteers are stationed outside in weather that is cold, wet or windy.

Participants are encouraged to wear several layers of protective clothing when competing in cold weather with the aim of keeping the body dry and reducing loss of heat. Extra layers following competitions and between racing is advisable where possible.



5.2 ACTIVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Host Organising Committee have the responsibility to modify, postpone or cancel any race on account of the weather conditions if they believe there is real danger to the Participants' health based on the heat index.

The following guidelines will determine activation of the recommendations.

For competitors over 16 years of age:

Where the heat index is 42 and above (Red Zone), competition should be postponed or cancelled. At heat index between 38 and 41, inclusive (Orange Zone), the Host Organising Committee need to assess the suitability of participation based on the following:

- Nature of Activity (e.g., duration/intensity of exposure, activity is in water, etc.)
- Fitness level of competitors
- Athletic ability
- Age of competitors
- Level of acclimatization.

For competitors 16 years and younger and KL1/VL1 Paracanoe Athletes:

Ideally, U16 and KL1/VL1 events should be scheduled for the cooler parts of the day.

Where the ambient temperature is 34 degrees and above and the heat index is 40 and above (Patterned Red Zone), competition for U16 and KL1/VL1 athletes should be postponed or cancelled.

As soon as the ambient temperature is 34 degrees or above, the Host Organising Committee need to assess the suitability of U16 and KL1/VL1 athletes participating in events based on the following:

- Nature of Activity (e.g., duration/intensity of exposure, activity is in water, etc.)
- Fitness level of competitors
- Athletic ability
- Age of competitors
- Level of acclimatization.
- For Para athletes, the nature of the impairment should be considered

For Technical Officials and Volunteers:

In addition to the guidelines for competitors, consideration must be given to technical officials and volunteers involved in the delivery of the paddling activity. At heat index between 38 and 41, inclusive (Orange Zone), the Host Organising Committee need to assess the suitability of technical officials and volunteers participating in events based on the following:

- Nature of Activity (e.g., duration/intensity of exposure, access to periods of rest, exposure to the elements, access to seating, water, and sustenance, etc.)
- Fitness level of participants
- Age of participants
- Level of acclimatization.

The Host Organising Committee should consider strategies to minimise risk to technical officials and volunteers, including rotation of roles, provision of additional food/drink/shade, etc. In extreme conditions, the Host Organising Committee should consider suspension of the paddling activity for 10 minutes every hour to allow officials and volunteers to take a break.

6. AIR QUALITY

Poor air quality can pose a health risk to Participants. Elevated exposure to pollutants can result in inflammation of the respiratory tract, exacerbating conditions such as asthma. During exercise the total amount of air passing through the airway can be increased, with a corresponding increase in pollutant exposure. The health impact of poor air quality can vary based on an individual's current health status and previous medical conditions.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is an accepted means of quantifying air quality by public health authorities encompassing:

- Air pollution levels at your nearest monitoring site or region
- The common contributing pollutants
- The overall health risk associated with a given rating

The AIS have published best practice guidelines on [Smoke Pollution and Exercise](#), recognizing that is not a one size fits all approach, the recommendations are a useful tool to adapt for specific sporting activities.

For healthy individuals, the AIS guidelines recommend that training/competition should be modified or cancelled if the AQI levels are more than 100 for prolonged intense endurance activities (e.g., Canoe Marathon, Ocean Racing, Canoe Polo or long-distance Canoe Sprint and SUP events) or more than 150 for intermittent or short duration intense activities (e.g. Canoe Slalom, Canoe Sprint, Canoe Freestyle events).

With that in mind, the Event Organising Committee must meet to consider cancelling or modifying the paddling activity as soon as the AQI levels elevate beyond 100 for longer duration activities and 150 for shorter duration and intermittent activities. In deciding whether the program for an activity should be altered, consideration should also be given to factors including:

- Whether recent readings suggest the AQI is trending up or down (Note: it is a recommendation that events are modified/cancelled if the AQI is above the tolerance threshold and is trending upwards);
- Temperature
- Humidity
- Prevailing winds
- Local bushfire or atmospheric conditions
- The AQI forecast and
- The particular nature of the activity, in terms of duration, intensity, etc.

In assessing real-time air quality, Event Organisers should consider utilising handheld devices (specifically for outdoor use) that measure PM2.5 concentration at the competition venue. Alternatively, Hourly AQI readings can be obtained using numerous Apps including:

<http://aqicn.org/here/>

Importantly, point in time readings should always be preferred to rolling 24-hour levels, given that local atmospheric conditions can change quickly. Attention should be paid to the time at which the reading was taken. It may be that the most recent reading is for conditions up to two and a half hours earlier. In such circumstances local observations may take on a larger role in deciding.

Participants who are more susceptible to poor air quality (e.g., asthmatics) should seek medical advice and make their own decision on whether they should participate in an activity once the AQI is over 100.

7. BUSHFIRES

Bushfires and grassfires are very common throughout Australia. The nature of these fires can be unpredictable and fast moving. PA recommends, activities should be cancelled or postponed if the advice in the area is “watch and act” or higher. 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. If the advice is increased to “Emergency” than all activities must stop immediately, and all participants must follow the instructions of emergency personnel in the area.

8. WIND

The Competition Manager or Safety Officer is at liberty to cancel or postpone an event or competition due to safety concerns regarding wind. Considering the unique circumstances and requirements of each Paddling discipline.

With this in mind, the Competition Manager or Safety Officer is encouraged to consider the [Beaufort Scale](#) when deciding whether to postpone or cancel an event or competition.

For flat water and team events such as Canoe Marathon, Canoe Sprint, Canoe Polo and some SUP events, Event Managers should consider cancelling or postponing activities when the wind force reaches level 7 or impacts the quality of the competition.

For Whitewater and Ocean events such as Canoe Slalom, Canoe Freestyle, Canoe Wildwater and Ocean Racing, Event Managers should consider cancelling or postponing activities when the wind force reaches level 9, impacts the quality of the competition or relevant safety authorities advise it is no longer safe to conduct the event.

9. LIGHTENING

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.

A safe distance from lightning is advised to be at least 10km. Therefore, if an activity is taking place within 10km of lightning sited, the recommendation is to stop activities and seek shelter.

If you are unable to access information on the location of the lightning, the 30/30 lightning guideline is to be used. The 30/30 lightning guideline is in two stages:

- 1. Stop the activity:**

If the time between seeing the lightning flash and hearing the thunder is less than 30 seconds, then all activities should stop, and you should seek shelter as the lightning is within 10km of your location.

- 2. When it is safe to resume the activity:**

A minimum 30-minute wait following the last lightening flash and thunder event is recommended before activities resume.

10. WATER QUALITY AND WATER SAFETY

Water quality standards impact the safety of paddling in the natural environment and the Event Manager should be aware of the Water Quality at the venue or location prior to the start of the event.

Water quality is impacted by weather, water craft and human activity. In particular, high rainfall and run-off or churning of the riverbed of lake can increase bacterial, microbial, and chemical water content. Whilst participants may not be impacted by these factors during competition, often gastrointestinal symptoms or illness will soon follow.

When considering water quality, the Event Manager should consider the following issues which impact Water Quality and Water Safety in the Risk Management Plan.

- 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., Crocodiles, Stingers).
- Chemical and Aesthetic quality (e.g., Industrial Waste)

Following flooding or significant churning, the Host Organising Committee is encouraged to liaise with the local council to ensure water quality testing is being conducted in the area or at the venue to ensure Microbial and Cyanobacterial levels do not risk participant health and wellbeing.

The Host Organising Committee and Event Manager are encouraged to observe physical signs which suggest issues regarding Water Quality and Safety which may impact the safe running of the event or competition.

11. RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMPETITION MANAGER

- The Competition Manager, or similar, is appointed by the Host Organising Committee.
- The Competition Manager or their delegate must have access to the appropriate weather monitoring equipment and/or internet sites to monitor weather conditions. For activities taking place in remote locations, this includes ensuring a steady internet signal is available.
- When conditions are forecast for extreme weather, or the weather begins to deteriorate conditions are to be monitored at least every hour.
- 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.
- 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.

- The Competition Manager or their delegate should keep timely records of the processes undertaken to reach decisions and the outcomes arrived at.
- 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.
- 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.
- The Competition Manager should liaise with the Chief Official of the competition regarding any decisions to cancel or postpone competition.

12. DECISION TO MODIFY/ SUSPEND/ CANCEL COMPETITION

- The Competition Manager has the power to cancel or postpone an activity on account of the weather conditions.
- Where possible, the Competition Manager should seek advice from an authorised medical person at the activity on if it is safe to continue the activity. Ideally, this medical advisor should be someone who does not have any interest in the outcomes of the activity itself, to maximise the objectivity of the advice provided.
- In assessing conditions, the Competition Manager should seek views from the stakeholder groups involved in the activity including but not limited to: Persons with experience of local conditions; Athletes; Officials; the relevant Paddle Organisation(s).
- Notwithstanding the above, PA 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 this Policy.

APPENDIX 1 – FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT TEMPRATURE RELATED RISKS

Exposure to high temperatures is an issue to be aware of with respect to all paddling activities. High intensity exercise in a hot environment, with the associated fluid loss and elevation of body temperature, can lead to dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It should be noted that children are generally more susceptible to heat related risks, given that they have greater difficulty in getting rid of heat. Accordingly, close attention should be paid to children to ensure that they are exercising at their preferred intensity.

Precautions for minimising the risks of heat injuries include:

AP1.1 FLUIDS

- **Do not wait to feel thirsty before you drink!** Thirst is a poor indicator – it is a late signal of severe fluid loss.
- Drink cool water as it is absorbed more rapidly than warm water.
- If competing for more than one hour, use a sports drink - a carbohydrate drink of 5-10% concentration with a small amount of sodium chloride (salt tablets should be avoided because of their very high sodium chloride content, which can make dehydration worse). Diluted sports drinks, cordial and fruit juices should also be made available or recommended. Not only will this make the fluids more palatable but it will be beneficial for replacing fluids, energy and electrolytes lost during exercise. It will delay the onset of exercise-induced exhaustion and hence aid in the prevention of heat stroke.

- It is recommended that officials and participants drink at least 7-8ml of fluid per kg of body mass, per hour, to diminish the risk of heat illness.
- Fluid should begin to be consumed at least two hours before exercising to promote adequate hydration.
- Drink at least 500 ml (2-3 glasses) ½ to 1 hr before a race. Drink at least 500 ml to 1 litre (5-6 glasses) after a race and continue to drink until fluid losses are replaced.

AP1.2 WHAT TO WEAR

- Wear a hat, cap or visor – a broad brimmed hat is preferred.
- Wear 50+ sunscreen to prevent skin damage and skin cancer.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.
- Where possible wear long-sleeve garments to cover as much of your skin as possible
- Replace sweat-saturated garments with dry clothing.

AP1.3 PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

- It is recommended that public announcements be regularly made during events reminding everyone to keep drinking water, apply sunscreen and remain in the shade whenever possible.

APPENDIX 2 – SYMPTOMS OF HEAT RELATED INJURY

AP2.1 SYMPTOMS OF HEAT EXHAUSTION

Dehydration can lead to heat exhaustion. Symptoms of heat exhaustion may include:

- High heart rate
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Loss of endurance / skill
- Confusion
- Nausea
- Cramps
- The skin may still be cool/sweating, but there will be signs of developing vasoconstriction, e.g. pale colour.
- They will pass little urine, which will be highly concentrated.
- They may collapse on cessation of activity.

If you have any of these symptoms, you should stop competing, drink more fluids and cool down (seek medical treatment if symptoms do not improve rapidly).

AP2.2 EMERGENCY PLAN FOR HEAT EXHAUSTION

If a person is showing any symptoms of heat exhaustion take the following action:

- Stop the person
- Lie the person down, preferably in shaded area out of direct sunlight
- Loosen and remove excessive clothing
- Cool by wetting skin liberally and vigorous fanning
- Give cool water to drink if conscious

- If the person is confused or unable to drink water seek medical help immediately.

AP2.3 SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STROKE

Severe dehydration may lead to heat stroke, which is potentially fatal and must be treated immediately by a medical practitioner. Participants who keep participating when suffering from heat exhaustion may experience heat stroke. Heat stroke can occur even when drinking plenty of fluids. It is important to cool the person down as quickly as possible. Heat stroke symptoms include:

- Dry Skin
- Confusion
- Collapsing

AP2.4 EMERGENCY PLAN FOR HEAT STROKE

If a person is showing any symptoms of heat stroke take the following action:

- **Call a doctor or Ambulance immediately**
- Stop the person
- Lie the person down
- Loosen and remove excessive clothing
- Cool by wetting skin liberally and vigorous fanning.
- If access to a shallow bath of water/iced water is available this should be used
- Give cool water to drink if conscious
- Apply wrapped ice packs to groin and armpits
- **SEEK MEDICAL ASSISTANCE**

For more information on heat related injuries refer [Sport Medicine Australia Extreme Heat Policy](#)

AP2.5 SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHERMIA

Participants are at particular risk of Hypothermia following a capsize in cold water. With this mind, participants are at a higher risk of Hypothermia during days which are cold, wet and windy. The severity of Hypothermia relates directly to the wind chill, the time a paddler remains in the water and/or the time taken to get them to a warm, dry place in warm, dry clothing.

Hypothermia symptoms include:

- Feeling cold
- Shivering
- Clumsiness
- Slurred Speech
- Irrational behavior
- Apathy

AP2.6 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR HYPOTHERMIA

If a person is showing signs of Hypothermia take the following action:

- As soon as possible, move the person to a warm, dry place.
- Avoid excess movement.
- Remove any wet clothing.
- Place person between blankets or in a sleeping bag and rest an emergency blanket over the top of them.
- Cover persons head to mitigate loss of heat.
- Give warm drinks if conscious.

- If available, apply heat packs to patients neck, arm pits and/ or groin. Alternatively, use body-to-body contact to aid rewarming (if appropriate).
- SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE.

AP2.7 WEATHER SAFETY APPS AND WEBSITES

In preparing for an event, the Host Organising Committee, Competition Manager and Safety Officer are encouraged to review and utilize the apps and websites as listed below.

BOM: <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/warnings/?ref=fr>

My lightning tracker: <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/warnings/?ref=fr>

SunSmart: <https://www.mobileaction.co/app/ios/au/sun-smart/402707467>

SurfLine: <https://www.mobileaction.co/app/ios/au/surfline-wave-and-surf-reports/39378209>

RainRadarAU: <https://www.mobileaction.co/app/ios/au/rain-radar-au/290920045>

Local Weather Warning and Radar: <https://www.mobileaction.co/app/ios/au/local-weather-warning-and-radar/1589580347>

