



HOT WEATHER POLICY

December 2010

INTRODUCTION

Oceania Athletics Association Inc (OA) recognizes that hot weather has an adverse effect on competition and recommends adoption of the following guidelines by the member clubs.

POLICY

All summer competition should when 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 should where possible be scheduled at the beginning or end of the meeting when temperatures may be lower.

AN INDIVIDUAL'S RESPONSIBILITY

As athletics is an individual sport it is OAA's Policy to encourage all athletes to take a sensible approach to training and competition in hot weather. The decision to participate or not in competition on hot days is one that each athlete and official must make.

Officials are frequently active for longer periods than competitors and therefore if officials feel that the conditions are too extreme and do not attend, then that event or meeting will become unofficial. Each athlete must then make a personal decision whether to compete on an unofficial basis.

BACKGROUND

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. At a Heat Index of over 32°C, heat stress is a possibility and all necessary precautions should be taken. When the Index tops 40°C it becomes dangerous to train or compete.

The following table shows the Heat Index for various temperatures and humidity.

H	T	27	29	32	35	38
40		26	30	34	38	43
50		27	31	36	42	49
60		28	32	38	47	56
70		29	34	41	51	62
80		30	36	45	58	69

Adapted from Runners World Magazine August 2000

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to our competition policy AMA 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.