Volleyball Australia

Extreme Heat Mitigation Policy

Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures and protocols for mitigating risks associated with extreme heat during volleyball and beach volleyball events. It is based on the Sports Medicine Australia (SMA) Extreme Heat Policy (EHP) Version 2 (2024) and applies sport-specific thresholds to reflect the unique demands of volleyball disciplines.

Beach Volleyball is recognised as carrying a higher heat risk due to outdoor exposure and will be managed accordingly. Indoor Volleyball will be benchmarked against comparable indoor sports within the SMA framework to ensure appropriate and consistent application.

This policy has been endorsed by Volleyball Australia's (VA) Athlete and Risk Committee (ARC). VA is committed to ensuring safe, fair, and transparent heat management practices that protect the wellbeing of all athletes, officials, coaches, staff and spectators.

Monitoring and Data Collection

The Referee Coach at each event, in conjunction with the Tournament Director (TD), will be responsible for monitoring the environmental conditions courtside to ensure accurate and timely decision-making. Measurements will be taken over a range of courts to account for varying conditions across the venue.

Monitoring should occur at least hourly, with frequency increased to every 15 – 30 minutes during elevated risk conditions.

Conditions will be recorded using the SMA Heat Policy web tool (https://sma-heat-policy.sydney.edu.au/) and/or a Sport Risk Classification chart in the competition office.

Environmental Conditions to be monitored include but are not limited to air temperature and humidity. Where possible, tools that can automate measurement and provide real-time update should be used. In the absence of such tools, wet bulb thermometers should be used to supplement and validate the SMA web tool outputs.

Cooling Measures

Volleyball Australia encourages the provision and use of cooling strategies as part of heat risk management. These measures support athlete safety and recovery and should be made available across all competition levels where practical.

Cooling measures include:

- **Hydration:** Provision of cold or icy fluids before, during, and after matches.
- **Evaporative cooling:** Use of wet towels, sponges, or spray bottles between rallies, breaks, and matches.
- **Cooling towels/ice:** Icy water available for dunking towels to be applied around the neck or head.
- **Shade access:** Encouragement to seek shade or air-conditioned areas between matches. VA to provide portable shade structures where natural or indoor shade is not available.
- **Cold/ice immersion (where available):** Use of cold tubs or immersion in cool water during extended breaks or suspension of play.

Risk Mitigation Measures *(based on SMA v2 thresholds)*

The mitigation strategies outlined below are progressional in nature. Measures introduced at lower thresholds (e.g. Low and Moderate) will remain in effect when higher thresholds are reached. At each escalation point, the existing measures should continue, and the additional measures listed for the higher threshold should also be implemented.

Low

- Continue to monitor readings hourly throughout the day.
- Reinforce hydration and heat management messaging to all participants.

Moderate

- Beach – Drink breaks at every change of ends (not limited to timeouts). Once implemented, these remain in place for the remainder of the day.
- Indoor – Introduction additional breaks (e.g. technical time outs for each set).
- Monitoring frequency increased to every 30 minutes.
- Participants encouraged to seek shade between matches. Where natural or indoor shade is unavailable, VA will provide portable sun shelters.
- Cold/icy water to be made freely available for use with cooling towels where possible.

High

Please refer to relevant competition regulations for each event/format for specific adjustments.

Additional Measures

- Clear instructions for participants to seek shade when not playing.
- Cooling strategies promoted, including:
    - Cold/icy fluids.
    - Wet towels or sponges.
    - Use of cold/icy water immersion if available.
- **Youth Events Note (under 18):** While physiological responses are similar to adults, children may hydrate less proactively. VA therefore apply earlier and more conservative strategies for youth events to reduce behavioural risk.

Extreme

- The Tournament Control Committee (TCC) will convene to assess the situation.
- Options include pausing or cancelling matches if conditions present an unacceptable risk.
- All changes will be communicated immediately via the venue PA system, referees via radio, and an email notification to participants and coaches.
- During suspension of play, participants should:
    - Move to shaded or air-conditioned spaces where possible.
    - Apply cooling strategies, including consumption of icy fluids, cold towel application, or cold/ice water immersion if available.

If extreme heat conditions reach a level where cancellation of matches or an entire event must be considered, the TCC will convene with the VA Executive to discuss the implications and determine the appropriate course of action.

Further Education

The following AIS resources should be made available to all participants to further educate them of the impact heat can have on their body. Suggestion to distribute these in competition communications leading into and during the event.

Access resources via: https://www.ausport.gov.au/ais/rest-hub/environment