



Extreme Weather in North West Area Guidance

Ensuring Safety, Performance, and Well-Being

Extreme weather conditions, whether intense heat, biting cold, heavy rain, snow, high winds, or poor air quality present unique challenges to players, coaches, and organisers. Safe participation in sports requires careful planning, proactive communication, and well-informed decision-making to reduce the risk of injury, illness, or long-term health consequences. The following comprehensive guidance serves as a resource to help clubs and the North West prepare for, adapt to, and respond effectively to extreme weather scenarios.

Please note that clubs should follow the regulations at all times and that clubs based in Wales should follow the North West Area League Regulations and guidance.

For the avoidance of doubt, where weather warnings are referred to these are Red and Amber warning as defined and issued by the Met Office.

General Principles for All Extreme Weather Conditions

- **Risk Assessment:** Before any sporting activity, conduct a thorough risk assessment considering the forecast, the venue's suitability, participant vulnerabilities, and local guidelines
- **Communication:** Ensure all players, coaches, umpires and spectators are informed of weather conditions, possible risks, and emergency procedures before and during the event
- **Flexibility:** Maintain flexibility in scheduling or modifying events. Consider postponement or cancellation if conditions threaten health or safety
- Where there is a likelihood that the extreme weather is going to impact the whole area then the ALMC will agree on the approach, which may include the postponement of all fixtures en masse across the area to a specific date
- If there is a Met Office Red Warning in force for game day across the area then the ALMC will notify Clubs by noon on the day before the games about a block movement of fixtures
- If there is a Met Office Amber warning in force for game day across the area then the ALMC will notify clubs if they are taking any decisions across the whole area or part of an area

Clubs are reminded of their responsibilities as per the Adult League Regulations and emphasise communication between both teams and the ALDS. The home team must:

- a) Confirm the latest acceptable notification time for cancellation with the visiting team
- b) Inspect the pitch before the visiting team's departure time, using a realistic view and the Met Office as a reference
- c) Notify the visiting team, umpires, match officials and ALDS immediately if the pitch is unfit. (Regulation 13.4.1)

The Adult League Regulations state that decision making authority is as follows immediately before or during a match:

- Immediately before or during a match, an accredited and assessed umpire has the authority to decide on postponement or abandonment due to safety concerns.
- If unassessed umpires are officiating, team captains will make the decision; if one captain deems the pitch unsafe, the match must be postponed
- The ALMC can apply sanctions if an inappropriate decision is made.

- The safety of players and umpires must be the key factor in the decision to postpone or abandon the match.

Guidelines for Specific Extreme Weather Conditions

Cold Weather and Wind Chill

All the below points are the responsibility of clubs and players:

- **Layered Clothing:** Encourage multiple breathable layers, including thermal undergarments, insulating mid-layers, and wind/waterproof outer layers
- **Warm-up:** Provide extended warm-up periods to prevent muscle strains. Keep muscles warm between sessions with extra clothing or blankets
- **Protecting Extremities:** Ensure hands, feet, ears, and face are covered to prevent frostbite. Use gloves, hats, and thermal socks
- **Hydration and Nutrition:** Remind players that hydration remains important in cold weather. Encourage warm fluids and regular meals
- **Monitor for Hypothermia:** Watch for confusion, shivering, slurred speech, or loss of coordination. Move affected individuals to a warm area and seek medical attention
- **Wind Chill Factor:** Adjust activity based on wind chill, which can lower effective temperatures and increase risk of cold injuries
- **Safe Playing Surface:** Inspect fields for ice, snow, or dangerous surfaces. Remove hazards or postpone the activity if safety cannot be assured

Heavy Rain and Flooding

- **Surface Assessment:** Check playing surfaces for pooling water, mud, or slip hazards. Cancel or modify activities if surfaces are unsafe
- **Lightning Protocol:** Follow the “30-30 rule”: if the time between lightning and thunder is 30 seconds or less, halt play and seek shelter. Only resume after 30 minutes without thunder
- **Shelter:** Ensure adequate shelter is available for all participants. Never shelter under trees or metal structures during a storm
- **Flood Risk:** Avoid low-lying areas and check for local flood warnings. Never attempt to cross flooded areas on foot or by vehicle
- **Visibility:** Consider the impact of reduced visibility on safety and fairness. Postpone play if vision is compromised

Snow and Ice

- **Surface Preparation:** Remove snow and ice from playing areas where possible, and use grit or sand to improve traction
- **Footwear:** Use shoes with appropriate grip or spikes to reduce the risk of slipping
- **Monitor for Frostbite:** Regularly check for numbness, discolouration, or pain in extremities
- **Equipment Safety:** Ensure equipment is not brittle or slippery due to cold
- **Visibility:** Be aware of the dangers of reduced visibility during heavy snowfall and ensure participants can be easily seen

High Winds

- **Secure Equipment:** Anchor moveable goals, tents, and other equipment to prevent accidents
- **Debris Risk:** Inspect the area for branches, litter, or loose objects that could become hazardous in strong winds
- **Adjust Activities:** Consider moving activities indoors or postponing if wind speeds are excessive

Conclusion

Adapting sporting activities to extreme weather is an evolving and essential responsibility. Proactive preparation, robust communication, and the application of evidence-based guidelines can significantly minimise risks to players, coaches, umpires and spectators. Prioritising safety ensures that the enjoyment and benefits of sport are preserved even under the most challenging weather conditions. Regular review

and practice of these guidelines will foster a resilient, informed, and healthy sporting community ready to face the elements, come rain or shine.