

AFA Extreme Weather Guidelines

The AFA has developed these guidelines to reduce the risk of extreme weather (lightning, heat etc) related injuries to competitors, dogs, judges and other officials and members of the public involved in Flyball events or activities. This document also contains a number of guidelines to help Judges and other officials in recognising and managing extreme weather. These guidelines are intended to operate alongside other related policies including the Competition Cancellation Policy. All members should use their judgement and common sense in the application of these guidelines.

The AFA is committed to safe and enjoyable events for all participants (including dogs) and spectators. This includes minimising risk due to adverse or extreme weather conditions.

Responsibilities:

Officiating Judge(s) and AFA Representative - Be aware of the prevailing weather conditions and how they may affect the handlers, their dogs and those officiating at the event.

Competition Organiser/Club officials - Be aware of predicted and prevailing weather conditions in terms of pre-planning (season, date, time etc), risk assessment and competition management (protocols for heat, lightning, cancellation etc).

Members attending an AFA competition/event - Be aware of the prevailing weather conditions.

Risk Assessment

All AFA events must be assessed for risk during the planning stages. Assessment includes consideration of risk associated with the venue, the activities and the participants. Included in this assessment must be the likely prevailing weather conditions and the likelihood of inclement weather. If the event is conducted during a season of likely storm activity or high heat or sun, these weather conditions must be factored into the planning and risk management for the event.

Heat and Sun

Wherever possible, events are to be scheduled to avoid hot conditions. Where events are scheduled during summer competition organisers should ensure they have available appropriate mechanisms for competitors and members to seek relief from the heat (i.e. shade, cooling, easy access to water etc).

Sun protection

It is recommended that all participants and officials in the sun wear hats and sunscreen (minimum SPF 30+) at all times. Sunscreen must be available for use by Judges and stewards who are in the sun for more extended periods and should be re-applied regularly.

It should be noted that sunscreen does not offer complete protection against the sun and should always be used in conjunction with other protective measures.

As far as is possible, shade should be provided for the ring stewards.

Shade structures that also provide protection from wind and run must be provided for the timekeepers.

A ready supply of drinking water must be available to all Judges and stewards.

Organisers are required to make available artificial shade for competitors waiting to enter the ring. Participants and officials are also encouraged to use other artificial means of shade such as umbrellas and cabanas and other on-field structures.

Care of dogs in the heat and sun

Comfort and safety of dogs is paramount at all times. Dogs should, preferably, be kept in shaded areas.

All dogs must have ready access to fresh cool water. Clubs are encouraged to provide shaded wading pools and/or spray hoses for cooling dogs.

The use of cool mats, coats, crate fans etc is at the discretion of the owner.

Rain

If it is raining heavily, and there are safety concerns, the competition may be discontinued for a period of time and then conditions reassessed to determine whether the competition/event should resume or be cancelled.

Safety concerns would include risk of slipping by handlers, impact of rain on all electrical equipment, visibility issues in very heavy rain etc.

If, in the opinion of the Officiating Judge/AFA representative/competition organiser, the rain fall is not a significant safety factor, then the competition may continue during the rain period.

Competition organisers should, as far as is possible, ensure team captains are kept informed of deliberations regarding whether to cancel or proceed.

As soon as rain appears, competition organisers must take appropriate action to protect the electronic timing system.

Hail Storms

In Australia, hail storms can be sudden and severe but are usually very short in duration. If a hail storm occurs during a competition, all activities should cease and all participants should seek suitable protective cover.

Lightning

Australian statistics show that approximately 25 per cent of people killed by lightning are playing sport. When thunderstorms threaten, Judges (and other Officials) must not let the desire to start a competition or event hinder their judgment when the safety of competition, dogs, officials and spectators is in jeopardy.

All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain.

Any time thunder is heard, the thunderstorm is close enough to pose an immediate threat to the location.

When thunderstorms are in the area but not overhead, the lightning threat can still exist even if it is sunny overhead and not raining or when clear sky is visible. Many lightning casualties occur before the thunderstorm rains have moved into the area; this is often due to people not seeking shelter soon enough.

Many casualties also occur after the rain dissipates; this can be due to people being in too much of a hurry to go back outside to resume activities.

Safe structures and locations

No place is absolutely safe from a lightning threat however some places are safer than others.

Safe structures:

- The primary choice for a safe structure is a large, fully enclosed building.
- If a building is not available, a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and the windows completely closed is a reasonable alternative.

Unsafe locations and situations

- An open field.
- Close vicinity to the tallest structure in the area eg tree(s), light pole(s).
- Small structures such as picnic shelters, tents, equipment sheds.
- Use of indoor phones.
- Use of electrical appliances.
- Umbrellas or any object that increases a person's height.

Criteria for suspension and resumption of activities

The sound of thunder should serve as an immediate warning of lightning danger. Generally speaking if an individual can see lightning and/or hear thunder he/she is already at risk.

The 30/30 rule

The 30/30 rule is used to serve as a guide for the suspension and safe resumption of activities and is not included as a binding process. The 30/30 rule is a 2 part rule providing guidance on when to suspend activities and then when to resume activities.

Suspend All Activities

Sound travels at about 1 kilometre every 3 seconds. When the flash-to-bang interval, (ie lightning is seen and then thunder is heard) approaches 30 seconds, this interval means that the storm is approximately 10 km away and everyone should be inside a safe shelter. If a member observes that the 30 second suspension rule could be applicable, they should inform the Competition Organiser and/or AFA Representative.

The Competition Organiser and/or AFA Representative, is to advise all Officiating Judges if the 30 second suspension rule is going to be applied, at which time the Judge must then cease all ring activities and members should be advised to take appropriate cover.

Resume Activities

If the 30 second suspension rule has been applied, Judges must wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or observation of lightning and ensure conditions are safe before leaving shelter to resume activities. The Judges, Competition Organiser, and AFA Representative must agree that the 30 minute resumption rule is applicable prior to resuming competition activities.

Each time lightning is observed or thunder is heard following application of the 30 second suspension rule, the 30-minute clock should be restarted.

It is important to note that the 30/30 rule is not an absolute rule. A storm may move very quickly, or not generate any lightning or thunder until it is very close, or topographical or wind conditions may prevent sound from traveling to your position. These conditions are especially common in mountain areas. It is important that all competitors and officials observe weather conditions and be alert to the possibility of the above occurring.

First aid in the case of lightning

Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to handle and need immediate medical attention. Cardiac arrest is the immediate cause of death in lightning fatalities. Some deaths can be prevented if the victim receives the proper first aid:

- Call an ambulance at once;
- Check the victim's pulse and breathing, begin CPR if necessary; and
- If possible, move the victim to a safer place. Be aware that the thunderstorm may still be dangerous. Don't let the rescuers become victims.

High wind

High wind has impact both on-field and off-field and to both competitors and officials

Tents and shade cabanas etc:

- Should be appropriately erected and tethered;
- Should be lowered or dismantled in high wind.

Equipment safety

- Officiating Judges (competition) or instructors/officials (demonstrations, training, other events) should be mindful that equipment does not pose a danger to the Dog, Handler, Judge, and/or officials during wind gusts.
- In particular, checks should be made on the security of the timing equipment, protection umbrellas, canopies and backboards and they should be removed or lowered if there is concern that gusts could cause injury or damage.

Decisions to suspend or cancel competitions or events due to high winds

Officiating Judges/officials should suspend judging/activities during severe wind gusts but may resume when conditions settle.

Refund Entitlements

Cancellation and refund entitlements in the case of competition cancellation are in accordance with the AFA Competition Cancellation Policy.