

STUDENT-ATHLETE EXTREME HEAT SAFETY AND PROTECTION

For purposes of this policy, heat guidelines are based on Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) levels developed by an organization or entity whose purpose is to regulate or govern interscholastic athletics programs in the Commonwealth.

Heat-Acclimation and Modification Procedure

The scheduling or cancellation of outdoor athletics practices or games is determined in relation to parameters established in connection with the different WBGT levels and tiers of the heat-acclimation and modification procedures.

The Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board establishes procedures for outdoor athletics practices or games with at least five tiers based on heat or humidity levels, beginning with the first tier for the lowest heat or humidity level requiring special student-athlete safety and protection precautions and ending with the most severe tier before the level at which all outdoor athletics practices or games will be cancelled.

Each tier identifies:

- required equipment modifications, if applicable for the sport;
- work-to-rest ratios;
- modification of water break requirements; and
- use of shaded areas for rest breaks.

Procedures

Maggie L. Walker Governor's School shall follow the current heat and hydration guidelines and WBGT participation recommendations of the Virginia High School League (VHSL), as applicable, together with current Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) guidance. The implementing procedures are incorporated into the Coaches' Handbook and other athletic department procedures.

The Coaches' Handbook and administrative procedures implement this policy; they do not replace or limit the requirements of this policy. Coaches shall complete all applicable VHSL, state, and MLWGS-required training and shall follow the school's athletic emergency action plans and heat-safety procedures.

MLWGS recognizes that heat-related illness may occur suddenly and does not necessarily progress from heat cramps to heat exhaustion to heat stroke. Coaches, student-athletes, athletic training personnel, and supervising staff should be alert to signs and symptoms and respond promptly.

Student-athletes may be at increased risk because of inadequate acclimatization, dehydration, prior heat illness, recent illness, chronic health conditions, certain medications, strenuous activity, protective equipment, or other individual factors. Appropriate staff should monitor

students with known risk factors and provide accommodations or additional precautions as indicated.

Recognition and Response

Condition	Possible Signs/Symptoms	Immediate Response
Dehydration / Heat Cramps	Thirst, fatigue, muscle cramps or spasms, heavy sweating.	Stop or reduce activity; move to a cool or shaded area; provide fluids as appropriate; stretch affected muscles and monitor for worsening symptoms.
Heat Syncope	Dizziness, lightheadedness, weakness, fainting or near-fainting.	Stop activity; move to a cool or shaded area; have the student sit or lie down; monitor the student and provide fluids if alert and able to drink. Seek medical evaluation when indicated.
Heat Exhaustion	Weakness, fatigue, headache, dizziness, nausea/vomiting, heavy sweating, cool or clammy skin, or other signs of heat stress.	Immediately remove the student from activity; move to a cool area; remove excess equipment/clothing; begin active cooling with cold water, ice towels/bags, fans, or other available methods; monitor closely and obtain medical assistance as indicated. The student shall not return to activity that day when heat exhaustion is suspected.
Exertional Heat Stroke	Altered mental status such as confusion, disorientation, irrational behavior, collapse, seizure, or loss of consciousness in the setting of severe heat stress. Sweating may be present.	MEDICAL EMERGENCY. Immediately begin rapid whole-body cooling, preferably cold-water immersion when available and appropriate. Activate EMS/911 in accordance with the athletic emergency action plan and continue cooling while awaiting EMS. A student suspected of heat stroke shall not return to play that day.

A student-athlete who reports or displays signs or symptoms of a heat-related illness during a practice or game shall be removed from the activity at that time for evaluation and appropriate

care. Staff shall err on the side of student safety when determining whether participation should continue.

Preventive Measures

- Ensure appropriate heat acclimatization by gradually increasing duration and intensity of activity and the use of protective equipment in hot and humid conditions.
- Provide readily accessible fluids and unhindered access to hydration and cooling space.
- Provide the rest periods, work-to-rest ratios, equipment modifications, and shaded or air-conditioned recovery areas required by the applicable WBGT level.
- Monitor student-athletes for signs and symptoms of heat-related illness and respond promptly.
- Schedule or modify strenuous outdoor activity when conditions warrant and in accordance with the applicable WBGT level.
- Ensure rapid-cooling resources are readily available when required by the applicable heat-safety procedures and athletic emergency action plan.
- Use breathable, appropriate clothing and modify protective equipment as required by the applicable WBGT level and sport.

WBGT Activity Guidelines

WBGT, rather than the NOAA/National Weather Service Heat Index, is the controlling environmental measure for the activity modifications and cancellation decisions required by this policy. NOAA/National Weather Service information may be used as a supplemental weather-awareness resource.

MLWGS shall use the current VHSL heat and hydration guidelines and WBGT participation recommendations to determine the applicable tier, including required equipment modifications, work-to-rest ratios, water breaks, shaded or air-conditioned recovery, and the WBGT level at which outdoor practices, scrimmages, or competitions are prohibited. If VHSL or VDOE revises the applicable WBGT thresholds or requirements, the Executive Director or designee shall promptly incorporate the current requirements into administrative procedures and bring any necessary policy revision to the Regional Board.

Cancellation of Athletics Practice or Games

Any athletics practice or game scheduled to take place during a time when the WBGT is at or above the cancellation level established by the current VHSL heat guidelines shall be cancelled, postponed, relocated, or moved indoors as permitted by those guidelines and school procedures.

Hydration and Cooling Space

Each student-athlete shall be given unhindered access at all times to hydration and a cooling space. The cooling space may be a shaded or air-conditioned area. Ice shall be made available and provided to each student-athlete and coach at any time there is a WBGT level of 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.

Water shall not be withheld as a disciplinary, motivational, or conditioning measure. Required rest periods shall be genuine rest periods and shall occur in the cooling location required by the applicable WBGT level.

Athletic Training and Emergency Action Plans

Implementation of this policy is supported by the school's athletic training services and athletic emergency action plans. The athletic trainer, when present, provides medical guidance within the scope of professional practice. Coaches and other supervising staff remain responsible for following required WBGT restrictions, recognizing and reporting symptoms, initiating emergency procedures, and complying with the applicable emergency action plan.

The school shall maintain access to the emergency and rapid-cooling equipment identified in its athletic emergency action plans and shall coordinate athletic emergency planning with emergency medical services as required by law.

Additional Procedures

The Executive Director establishes:

- parameters for scheduling and cancelling outdoor athletics practices or games in accordance with the heat-acclimation and modification procedure and current VHSL WBGT guidelines;
- procedures for measuring or obtaining representative WBGT conditions and communicating activity restrictions to coaches and supervising staff;
- procedures relating to preventing, recognizing, and addressing heat-related illnesses, including dehydration, heat syncope, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke;
- procedures for coach training, athletic emergency action plan review, hydration, cooling, and rapid-cooling readiness; and
- a process for reporting and investigating any instance in which a student-athlete experiences a severe heat-related illness requiring emergency medical treatment or resulting in death.

Reporting, Review, and Updating

Any severe heat-related illness requiring emergency medical treatment, and any heat-related death, shall be reported promptly to the Executive Director or designee and reviewed in accordance with school procedures. The review should address the environmental conditions, applicable WBGT tier, activity modifications, hydration and rest measures, emergency response, and any corrective action or additional training indicated.

This policy and its implementing procedures shall be reviewed and updated as necessary to remain consistent with the guidelines of the Virginia Board of Education, current VHSL heat guidelines, and applicable Virginia law. The Virginia Board of Education reviews its extreme-heat guidance biennially; MLWGS shall review this policy when those guidelines are updated and make revisions as necessary.

Adopted: September 18, 2025

Amended: October 16, 2026

Legal References

Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-271.10, Guidelines and policies on student-athlete extreme heat safety and protection.

Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-271.9, Cardiac emergency response or emergency action plans required.

Virginia Department of Education, Guidelines for Policies on Heat-Related Illness Prevention in Student-Athletes, current edition.

Virginia High School League, Heat and Hydration Guidelines / WBGT Participation Recommendations, current edition.

Cross References

Pol 2020 School Crisis, Emergency Management and Medical Emergency Response
Plan

Pol 2022 Emergency First Aid, CPR and AED Certified Personnel

Pol 4091 Student-Athlete Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Reg 4093 Student-Athlete Cold Weather Policy for Practice and Games

Pol 6010.1 Community Use of School Facilities

Pol 6015 Public Conduct on School Property