

# GHSA Heat/Humidity Policy

## 1. BY-LAW 2.67 – “Practice Policy for Heat and Humidity

Schools must follow the statewide policy for conducting practices and voluntary conditioning workouts in all sports during times of extremely high heat and/or humidity that will be signed by each head coach at the beginning of each season and distributed to all players and their parents or guardians. The policy shall follow modified guidelines of the American College of Sports Medicine in regard to:

1. The scheduling of practices at various heat/humidity levels
2. The ratio of workout time to time allotted for rest and hydration at various heat/humidity levels
3. The heat/humidity level that will result in practice being terminated

A scientifically approved instrument that measures Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) reading must be utilized at each practice to ensure that the written policy is being followed properly.

WBGT READING	ACTIVITY GUIDELINES & REST BREAK GUIDELINES
<b>UNDER 82.0</b>	Normal activities --Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour of minimum duration of 3 minutes each during workout
<b>82.0 -86.9</b>	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; watch at-risk players carefully; Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour of a minimum of four minutes duration each.
<b>87.0 – 89.9</b>	Maximum practice time is two hours. For Football: players restricted to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice. All protective equipment must be removed for conditioning activities. For all sports: Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour of a minimum of four minutes each
<b>90.0--92.0</b>	Maximum length of practice is one hour, no protective equipment may be worn during practice and there may be no conditioning activities. There must be 20 minutes of rest breaks provided during the hour of practice.
<b>OVER 92</b>	No outdoor workouts; Cancel exercise; delay practices until a cooler WBGT reading occurs

## GUIDELINES FOR HYDRATION AND REST BREAKS

1. Rest time should involve both unlimited hydration intake (water or electrolyte drinks) and rest without any activity involved
2. For football, helmets should be removed during rest time
3. The site of the rest time should be a “cooling zone” and not in direct sunlight.
4. When the WBGT reading is over 86:
  - a. ice towels and spray bottles filled with ice water should be available at the “cooling zone” to aid the cooling process.
  - b. Cold immersion tubs must be available for practices for the benefit of any player showing early signs of heat illness.

## DEFINITIONS

1. **PRACTICE:** the period of time that a participant engages in a coach-supervised, school-approved sport or conditioning-related activity. Practices are timed from the time the players report to the field until they leave.
2. **WALK THROUGH:** this period of time shall last no more than one hour, is not considered to be a part of the practice time regulation, and may not involve conditioning or weight-room activities. Players may not wear protective equipment.

**PENALTIES:** Schools violating the heat policy shall be fined a minimum of \$500.00 and a maximum of \$1,000.00.

# **GHSB FOOTBALL HEAT POLICY – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## WHEN DOES THE HEAT POLICY STOP?

A: Some aspects of the heat policy are always in effect regardless of the sport. The limitations in

By-law 2.67 (Institutional Heat Policy) are in effect anytime the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature

(WBGT) reading registers in an elevated level. The limitation on activities that are on the published chart must be followed.

The Football Preseason Heat Guidelines are in effect from the beginning of the acclimatization activities (five consecutive weekdays before the first practice in full pads) until the first game of the season.

## WHAT IS THE WBGT?

A: The Wet Bulb Globe Temperature reading is a composite temperature used to estimate the effect of air temperature, humidity, and solar radiation on the human body. The reading is expressed in degrees, but should not be equated with degrees of air temperature. For example:

A WBGT reading of 92 is somewhat comparable to a Heat Index reading of 104-105 degrees.

A Heat index reading merely reflects the combination of heat and humidity as “how hot it feels” on a person who is normally dressed and not involved in strenuous activity. Therefore, the Heat

Index has little relevance to a football practice setting.

## HOW FREQUENTLY SHOULD WBGT READINGS BE TAKEN IN PRACTICE?

A: Obviously, the reading should be taken just before the scheduled starting time for the practice to determine what levels of activity are permissible – or if the practice will need to be postponed until the WBGT reading gets to an acceptable level. The frequency of readings during the practice will likely depend on when the practice is scheduled. An early practice with temperatures increasing during the practice time may require several readings being taken. A late afternoon or evening practice with temperatures decreasing during the practice time should not require as many readings. The important thing is that the risks to the players are being monitored appropriately.

## WHY DOES THE HEAT POLICY APPLY TO PRACTICES AND NOT TO GAMES?

A: The researchers who conducted the 3-year study on heat illness agreed with the GHSB administrators that there are enough built-in opportunities for players to get rest and hydration breaks during the course of a game. Everyone on the team is not participating intensely at one time. Officials and coaches are available to monitor 22 players in a game setting, while coaches may have 100 or more players to monitor during a practice setting.

It is important to remember that scrimmages are practices and they do fall under the heat policy guidelines. These interscholastic contests often occur early in the acclimatization process and extra attention needs to be given to player well-being.

#### WHAT CONSTITUTES A “CONDITIONING ACTIVITY?”

A: Conditioning activities involve weight-training, distance running, “gassers”, “running the stadium”, and other such things. Whether these activities are done before or after a practice, they are considered to be a part of the practice and must be figured into the time restrictions.

The heat policy should be in effect for “voluntary conditioning” programs since statistics at both high school and collegiate levels indicate that a large percentage of serious heat illness episodes occur during these activities.

#### WHAT ARE “WALK-THROUGHS” & WHEN MAY THEY BE HELD?

A: Walk-throughs are not considered a part of a practice since they have so many limitations placed on them. A walk-through session may last no longer than one hour. During a walkthrough period, players may not wear protective equipment so no contact drills may be held. No conditioning activities may held during a walk-through period. A walk-through may not be held on a day when there are two practices being held. These sessions are designed to work on offensive and defensive schemes and techniques without being involved in contact work.