



SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

Purpose

1. This policy is designed to establish guidelines for the health and safety of participants, volunteers and spectators at touch events held in Scotland with regard to severe weather.

Scope

2. This policy covers all tournament competitions affiliated to the Scottish Touch Association and its affiliated Regional Associations. It also covers any training sessions held by the Scottish Touch Association or its affiliated clubs.
3. Touch is an outdoor sport played throughout the year on different surfaces. On occasions severe weather may be encountered. Severe weather conditions – such as, but not limited to: thunder and lightning; flooding/torrential rainfall; and extreme temperatures – need to be considered and assessed to ensure it is safe to commence or continue play.
4. This policy is intended to complement the severe weather policies that tournament providers currently have in place, to protect the wellbeing of participants and help meet the liabilities held by administrators and facility managers for that.

Policy Criteria

5. The tournament organiser, match referee, groundsman or facility management has the right to suspend play where the health and safety of the players, referees and other volunteers is potentially at risk from severe weather.

General Process

6. Where a severe weather event has the potential to cause harm to participants and volunteers at a touch event the tournament organiser, match referee, groundsman or facility management shall suspend play. The suspension of play may be temporary or permanent in accordance with the criteria given in this policy.
7. All participants and volunteers must on notification make their way in a safe manner to a suitably safe place.
8. The tournament organiser will review the weather conditions on a 30-minute basis until play is either resumed or cancelled.

One or Multi-Day Tournament Process

9. Where a severe weather event has been called by the tournament organiser the following criteria shall apply to the game:
 - Suspended at or after half-time – result stands.
 - Suspended before half-time with more than 30-minute suspension – tournament organiser determines new standard game time (i.e. 15/12/10 minutes one way), resume playing to conclusion of new game time, at which time result stands.

Scottish Touch Series Events

10. Where a severe weather event has been called by the tournament organiser and the tournament cannot be played to a conclusion the following criteria shall apply:

- Cancellation during the knock-out stages – all points available at that stage of the tournament to be split equally across those teams competing in that section (i.e. the four Cup semi-final teams split the points for 1st-4th place, the Plate semi-final teams would split point for 13th-16th place)
- Cancellation during the pool stages – all teams will be ranked according to the points accrued during their pool games. Where teams have equal pool points this will give them an equal ranking with other team from other pools. Any tournament points would then be distributed according to the placement in the ranking as defined above.

League Process

11. League organisers shall attempt to reschedule league games that have been cancelled or postponed. In the event that the fixtures are unable to be rescheduled the following shall apply:

- Suspended at or after half-time – result stands
- Suspended before half-time or before tap-off – drawn match.

12. There shall be no obligation on a tournament organiser to refund team entry fees, either in whole or in part where that tournament is cancelled or altered due to severe weather and where this STA severe weather policy has been implemented.

Severe Weather Criteria

Thunder and Lightning

13. 30-60 people are struck by lightning each year in Britain, and on average, 3 (5-10%) of these strikes are fatal.¹

14. All play will be suspended when thunder and lightning occur in the vicinity of the Touch event – when the flash to bang is 30 seconds in length or less². No play shall resume until at least 30 minutes has passed from the last clap of thunder.

15. Referees, players and coaches have the right to stop play if they think that lightning threatens them, even though the Tournament Organisers may not have authorised it. Players and coaches should request this through the referee so that play is stopped in an orderly manner.

16. Tournament organisers should ensure that places used for shelter are not especially vulnerable to lightning.

¹ <https://www.rospa.com/leisure-safety/advice/lightning/>

² [Recommendations for lightning protection in sport. Medical Journal of Australia, Vol 177, 1 July 2002](#)

Flooding/Torrential Rainfall

17. All play will be suspended when the touch pitch is deemed unplayable due to flooding or excessive standing water.
18. Whilst touch can still be played through puddles, consideration must be made to player safety especially in and around the touchdown area and near both substitution boxes. Where excessive standing water occurs the tournament organiser or match referee shall suspend play if the risk to participant safety is considered unacceptable.

Extreme Heat

19. Where temperatures exceed 30°C there is an increased risk of heat related conditions – e.g. heat stroke. Tournament organisers and referees can reasonably expect that players and volunteers will take reasonable precautions. However, where temperatures rise above 30°C the physical exertions of the tournament may take effect.
20. Reasonable precautions for players and volunteers would include, but are not limited to, sun-cream, hats and drinking plenty of liquids. In addition, tournament organisers would be expected to provide
 - sun-cream (to avoid sunburn)
 - shaded areas (i.e. tent/gazebo as a cooler place to reduce body temperature)
 - drinking water (to replenish fluids)
 - limit total playing time to allow for recovery
 - extending playing time into the morning and evening and introducing an early afternoon break to avoid the hottest parts of the day
21. Temperature approaching 30°C communicate warnings of heat stress and the appropriate management strategies.
22. Ambient air temperature above 35°C (in the shade) all play will be suspended.

Extreme Cold / Icy conditions

23. Where temperatures drop below 0°C there is an increased risk of hypothermia, especially if combined with wet weather and/or wind. Tournament organisers and referees can reasonably expect that players and volunteers will take the usual precautions of additional protective layers, hats, gloves and warm food and liquids. However, organisers are to pay particular attention to the participants where temperatures fall below 0°C as the physical exertions of the tournament/training may take effect.
24. Where hail and ice occur, play should be suspended until these conditions have ceased. Hard ground due to ice should lead to a suspension of play.

ANNEX A - EXTREME WEATHER GUIDELINES

Table 1 – Extreme Weather Guidelines

Identify Hazard	Action Required
a) Lightning/ Thunder	When lightning is considered to be a possible or actual threat to a Touch game the following procedures are applicable: In the absence of specific information from weather radar, a lightning location system, or specialised warning device then the 30/30 Safety Guideline should be used. The 30/30 Rule is a guide to postponement or suspension of play/competition. The accepted “safe” distance from lightning is greater than 10km. This means: a) That as the time interval between observing the flash and hearing the thunder approaches 30 seconds, all those in exposed areas should be seeking or already inside safe shelters. A storm cell with lightning within 10km constitutes a threat b) For resumption of play/competition, it is recommended that people wait a minimum 30 minutes after the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder.
b) Heavy rain	Play/ Competition should be suspended until the hazard clears.
c) Extreme Heat	36°C Play/ Competition should be postponed or cancelled. 30°C+ Communication of heat stress management strategies/ Warnings of possible risk.
d) Extreme Cold Weather	If the ground is slippery from frost, snow, rain or mud, or if the temperature drops below 0°C, it is at the discretion of the controlling body to determine whether play/ competition should be suspended or cancelled until hazard clears.
e) Hail/ Ice on ground	Play/ Competition should be suspended immediately until hazard clears. Where available, shelter should be offered for players/ spectators/ officials until cleared.
f) Excessive standing water	Play should be suspended where the ground conditions are such that there is an unacceptable risk to participant safety. Note that only one spot on the ground needs to be deemed unplayable for the whole pitch to be considered so.

This table is copied and adapted on the Touch Football Australia Extreme Weather Guidelines.

http://touchfootball.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Extreme_Weather_Guidelines_April_2015.pdf

References

1. Makdissi M, Brukner P. Recommendations for lightning protection in sport, Medical Journal of Australia, Vol 177, 1 July 2002. <http://www.peterbrukner.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/60.-Makdissi-Brukner-MJA-Lightning.pdf>
2. **RandA rules** Section 6 Inclement Weather and Suspensions of Play - 6-8 Inclement Weather and Suspensions of Play <http://www.randa.org/Guidance-on-Running-a-Competition/Rules/6-Competition-Administration/SubRules/8-Inclement-Weather-and-Suspensions-of-Play>
3. **RandA rules** Appendix I, Part B - Conditions of the Competition - 4. Suspension of Play Due to a Dangerous Situation <http://www.randa.org/Rules-of-Golf/Appendices/Appendix-IPartB-Conditions-of-the-Competition/4-Suspension-of-Play-Due-to-a-Dangerous-Situation>
4. **RandA Guidelines on Lightning Safety** - <http://www.randa.org/~media/DD46CC76129E4509A30B50812AA1FE24.ashx>
5. **Touch Football Australia Extreme Weather Guidelines** http://touchfootball.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Extreme_Weather_Guidelines_April_2015.pdf