

Guidelines for smoke-affected environments

With the onset of bushfire smoke having the potential to impact practice matches, and training sessions, posing a possible health risk to players and officials, the below information can help your club with managing the risks associated with air quality, smoke and exercise.

Noting how quickly weather conditions can change and smoke pollution can become significantly worse or significantly improve in the space of hours, the decision to play or train should ideally be considered in the same way as other weather events (rain, poor light) and be made on the day. However, this needs to be balanced against the health risks, potential inconsistent application of approach where there are no official umpires, and in many cases the lack of a “real time” measure of air quality. This may require competing teams to consider the cancellation of matches prior to game day.

The AFL Victoria Extreme Weather Policy does not have a category dedicated to air quality conditions. Most of the policy refers to extreme Heat, Cold and Lightning conditions, the policy may assist, particularly Section 6, 7 and 8 as detailed below:

6. Other Extreme Weather or Environmental Conditions

In the case of any other events of extreme weather or environmental conditions, including but not limited to extremely strong winds, flood, extreme fire danger, or fires being present in the vicinity of the training session/game, consultation of all parties involved must take place to determine the safest outcome for all involved.

7. Personal Responsibility

In any case of extreme weather or environmental factors, it is the personal responsibility of each person involved; player, official, staff, spectator or volunteer, to ensure their own personal safety.

8. Prevailing Statement

Where possible, clubs should continue training or play where they are able to do so, however, player and official’s safety will remain the paramount consideration. All measures should be taken to ensure no players or officials are put at risk of serious health concerns by participating in a game or training session during extreme weather or environmental conditions.

<https://aflvic.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/AFL-Victoria-Extreme-Weather-Policy.pdf>

The following considerations should be considered when deciding to play or train when air quality is a potential issue.

General air quality at the ground / training facility

- If any of the air quality measures are over 200, we advise serious consideration to be given to suspending play/training. Noting that ‘real time’ measures may not be available, the 24-hour rolling average measure should be considered along with the other points below (acknowledging that the 24-hour rolling average may over or underestimate the actual air quality at the time of judgement). Air quality measures for Victoria can be found via the link here. [here](#)

Visibility

- Where visibility is poor, air quality will be poor.
- Assessment of visibility will be similar to bad light considerations.

Player feedback

- Match officials / coaches / captains should monitor players and officials for signs of feeling unwell and seek regular feedback.
- Those with known respiratory conditions are coping and have the support they need including medications

It's also worth noting that EPA classify the standard of air quality, and provide guidance on how to manage /avoid health related matters ... such as the one below

Issued Monday 13th January at 5:10 PM.

This **Advice** is being issued for POOR to HAZARDOUS air quality across the state tomorrow, Tuesday 14 January.

- Poor air quality is likely to continue in the North East of the state from NSW and local fires on Tuesday.
- The North East and East Gippsland are likely to experience air quality impacts early this week. Higher temperatures are likely to increase fire activity, with calm conditions causing smoke to settle, moving into towns at the foot of valleys.
- Some smoke haze may still occur in the Western districts.
- Conditions will be hot during the day with light winds and milder afternoon coastal sea breezes.

Smoke can affect people's health. You should be aware of the impacts of smoke on you and your family's health.

Everyone should minimise the time spent in smoky conditions whenever practical to do so.

What you should do:

- Anyone experiencing wheezing, chest tightness and difficulty breathing should call Triple Zero (000).
- If you have concerns about your health you should seek medical advice or call [Nurse on Call](#) on 1300 606 024.
- Symptoms of smoke inhalation injury can include itchy eyes, sore throat and runny nose through to shortness of breath, coughing, vomiting, nausea, and confusion.



People should guard against exposure to smoke by taking some simple precautions:

- Stay inside your house if possible; close all windows and doors.
- If you use an air conditioner switch it to “recycle” or “recirculate”.
- Avoid exercise.
- Ordinary paper dust masks and handkerchiefs won't filter out fine particles from bushfire smoke - use a special P2 or N95 filter mask, which you can get at a hardware store. Be sure it fits properly and you don't have any medical issues that would prevent use.

Smoke and your health:

- Some people are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke.
- You will be more sensitive to smoke if you have a heart or lung condition (including asthma), are pregnant, or are over 65. Children up to 14 are more sensitive to the effects of breathing in smoke.
- If you are sensitive to smoke you should limit prolonged or heavy physical activity. Where possible you should try to stay indoors.
- If you have a heart or lung conditions you should take your medication as prescribed by your doctor.
- If you are asthmatic, follow your asthma plan and carry reliever medication with you.
- For more information on smoke and your health visit <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/your-environment/air/smoke>.

This message was issued by Environment Protection Authority.