



EXTREME WEATHER GUIDELINES – HEAT

Issued: June 2026

Outdoor bowls is usually played during the hottest months of the year. Everyone involved should consider the risks of playing, spectating or officiating in hot, sunny or humid conditions.

Whilst we cover Inclement Weather within **Appendix F** of the [Bowls England Rules and Regulations](#) and have issued guidance on this topic in the past, this document provides additional support to guide affiliated clubs, counties and associated organisations given the current extreme weather that we are experiencing across England.

It is designed to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants. **Decisions regarding playing conditions due to inclement weather should always prioritise player welfare.**

EXTREME HEAT

Extreme heat conditions are those that are hotter and/or more humid than normal local summer thresholds. Much higher temperatures are now being experienced in the UK, with temperatures of 40°C experienced across the country in recent years.

Take particular care when amber or red extreme heat warnings are in place.

Local conditions also need to be considered in addition to weather forecasts: each club will have its own degree of 'stillness', available shade, and radiant heat properties, which may generate even higher temperatures in the shade.

Dangers of Heat

Overheating is a risk for all participants. Heat-related illnesses, like heat exhaustion or heatstroke, happen when the body is not able to cool itself properly. In these cases, a person's body temperature rises faster than it can cool itself. The impact of high temperatures can be made worse by increased humidity and a high UV index.

The NHS suggests that heat exhaustion does not usually need emergency medical help if you can cool down within 30 minutes.

Signs of heat exhaustion include:

- tiredness
- dizziness
- headache
- feeling sick or being sick
- excessive sweating
- pale and clammy skin
- heat rash
- cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
- fast breathing or heartbeat,
- a high temperature
- being very thirsty
- feelings of weakness

In severe cases, an individual may develop heatstroke. The NHS recognises heatstroke as a medical emergency. Get immediate medical help if someone has the symptoms of heatstroke. The symptoms of heatstroke include:

- a very high temperature
- hot skin without sweating
- fast breathing and a fast heartbeat
- confusion and restlessness
- seizure (fit)
- loss of consciousness

Planning and Welfare

The following steps should be taken by all individuals including, but not limited to, greenkeepers, players, spectators and officials.

Anyone can be affected by extreme heat, but those who are most likely to suffer severe effects are older people (those over 65), young children (particularly those under five), and people with existing health conditions. Having strategies in place in advance provides the best chance of ensuring participants' welfare:

Matches

Pre-match:

- Include weather conditions in your risk assessment and consider the safety of everyone attending including spectators, staff and volunteers
- Monitor the weather forecast in the days before the event including wind chill or 'feels like' temperature
- Check the air pollution forecast – in hot weather air pollution can increase and cause problems for people with breathing problems or asthma
- The day before the fixture, check the forecasted temperature and/or any Heat-Health Alert issued, as well as the UV index, and plan appropriately
- Consider whether the time of the match could be moved to avoid the hottest part of the day, or time when conditions will be cooler - the sun is strongest between 11am and 3pm so take particular care during this period
- Consider whether the fixture should be re-arranged if conditions will be dangerous or unreasonable

Match Day

Having assessed the above, should you choose to go-ahead, please note the following:

- Consider shortening the length of match
- Take steps to protect from heat and sun including taking on extra fluids, wearing caps or wide brimmed hats, long sleeve shirts, sunglasses, frequently applying sunscreen etc.
- Ensure availability of cold water and cooling aids such as ice and ice-towels.
- Create a 'cool' area using natural shade or creating shade for participants.
- Be extra vigilant monitoring participants exhibiting signs of heat related illnesses (see 'Signs of heat exhaustion'). Contact NHS 111 if you are concerned about someone's health.
- Spectators should seek shaded areas and stay hydrated

Sun Protection

- Apply a broad-spectrum product with an SPF 30 or higher, paying special attention to your ears and nose, as well as other exposed areas prone to burning.
- Once applied to the skin, reapply sunscreen every 2 hours, or more often if you are prone to excessive sweating
- Remember to wear a cap or wear a broad brimmed hat which offers greater protection as it can shade the ears and neck
- Wear light coloured, light weight clothing that protects arms and legs

Heat-Health Alerts

The UK Health Security Agency, in partnership with the Met Office, has an alert system designed to identify when adverse temperatures are likely to impact on the health and wellbeing of the population (sign-up [here](#)). The core alerting season for heat events is between 1 June and 30 September. Alerts will be colour coded yellow, amber or red, with red indicating a significant risk to life for even the healthy population.

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

Do not take unnecessary risks in thunder and lightning. This is not a good idea for a number of reasons, some of which are:

- Lightning can kill or seriously injure
- Blue skies overhead do not guarantee protection from lightning strikes
- Lightning can strike far from where it is raining and it may come out of the blue, with no cloud in the sky and not a drop of rain
- It can strike even when the storm is as much as 10 miles away, though 6 miles or so is usually quoted as being a range at which risk really escalates
- Any exposed open area can be at risk if there's thunder and/or lightning about
- Lightning won't necessarily go for the tallest nearby tree; it could jump sideways from another object to hit you or strike the ground and travel through it hitting you on the way
- It is likely to seek conducting objects (including metal, carbon fibre etc)
- It can travel from person to person if you're close together

Go indoors immediately if

- There is sudden thunder without lightning
- You see lightning in the clouds
- Flash to bang time is 30 seconds or less
- You see lightning strike the ground or a building etc. nearby

Do Not

- Bunch together – spread out as you move indoors
- Shelter under a tree, especially a single tall tree
- Stay outside if you can get into a building (or a car)
- Use an umbrella or gazebo as cover
- Avoid small sheds etc and stay away from windows and doors

When to resume following Thunder/Lightning

Keep watching and listening - 30 minutes after the last thunder it should be safe to go out – but if in doubt – stay indoors.

Danger Signs

There is imminent danger of a lightning strike if:

- You feel your hair standing on end
- There is crackling in the air
- There is sudden thunder without lightning

Remember - there is no safe place outside in a thunderstorm! Never lie flat on the ground during a lightning storm. If you can get into a sturdy building or a car do this at once.

The '30/30 Rule'

Get indoors when thunder is audible within 30 seconds after you see the associated flash (the 'flash to bang time') and don't venture out until thunder has not been heard for 30 minutes.

We urge all Clubs and Counties to familiarise themselves with the Inclement Weather rules outlined in **Appendix F** of the [Bowls England Rules and Regulations](#). This includes details on match requirements across all Bowls England events when it is either not reasonable or possible to play.