

August 3, 2017

BC Soccer Air Quality Safety Guidelines

Player health and safety is a high priority for BC Soccer, thus it is recommended to err on the side of caution if ever in doubt in any situation regarding the health and safety of players.

These guidelines:

1. serve as a guidance for member organizations, affiliates, team officials, players, and match officials (registered referees) of BC Soccer.
2. suggests what affiliated members, match officials and team officials should consider in assessing air quality at local fields and awareness of potential health impacts, and
3. provide additional information about the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) and where the AQHI can be found online.

Guidelines

Step 1 – go to https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/provincial_summary/bc_e.html (APP also available, see resources).

Note: use the BC website and links to BC cities. The Environment Canada (federal) website does not list

Step 2 – find the location, note the station, time, and date, and index calculation.

Note: index is normally updated hourly (at the top of the hour) and suggested to use the index calculation that is within one hour of scheduled kick-off or practice time.

Step 3 – Games and Tournaments

If the AQHI is “7” or higher recommended to postpone / reschedule match.

If the AQHI is still above “7” at the rescheduled kick off time teams involved and the match official should consider delaying kick-off or cancelling the game.

Important note: the match official (registered referee) reserves the final right to cancel the game if the conditions are considered dangerous, in their opinion.

Referee to write on game sheet reason for abandonment with the Index calculation, time & date number calculated and AQHI station used.

If air quality changes dramatically during a game (e.g. sudden smoke event caused by wind direction change) referees and team officials are advised to use their discretion. Record all decisions and relevant information on the game sheet.

Step 3 – Training and Practices

Team officials should consider a rescheduled practice or postponing practice until a later time.

Incorporating Air Quality calculations into Soccer Activity

1. Incorporating AQHI into your training practices
 - a. Access the latest AQHI calculations
 - b. If air quality is “3” or below continue with training as normal.
 - c. If air quality is an index of 4 – 6 then be prepared to adjust the practice by:
 - Reducing the intensity.
 - Reducing the duration of the practice.
 - Providing resting periods.
 - d. If air quality is “7” or above reschedule.
2. Be aware of weather and other conditions:
 - a. Current forest fires and their locations in the province.
 - b. Local burning of stubble on fields or agricultural fields – these can increase particulate matter in the air without impacting the AQHI for a city.
 - c. Sudden and dramatic changes in wind strength and direction.
 - d. Proximity of any major road or highway.
 - e. Near or downwind of any industrial areas or other significant emission sources.
3. BC Health Services maintains an Air Quality Advisory website. This site is helpful for planning your outdoor event. <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/bcairquality/readings/aqhi-table.xml>

Additional Information

1. Health Canada recommends through the AQHI that for strenuous activities like soccer anything above an AQHI of 7 then one should reschedule the event.
2. The AQHI treats anything above 10+ as “Very High” with health messages for the “general” and “at risk” populations to reschedule all outdoor activities – strenuous or not.
3. Elite athletes are in the “at-risk population because of the intensity and duration of exposure to outdoor air quality.” Women appear to be more affected than men due to smaller airways, lungs, and respiratory systems Regarding air quality, soccer is considered a high exposure sport.
4. Individuals tend to rely on sensory perception to evaluate air quality when, in fact, the pollutants that present the greatest harm to human health are difficult to see or smell (e.g. ground level ozone).
5. It is neither possible nor desirable to acclimatize athletes to air pollution. The US Olympic Committee recommends that when competing in high pollution areas the best strategy for training is alternative sites. “Stay away from air pollution.”