

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Darshana R. Patel, Chair
AB 2503 (Wallis) – As Amended April 13, 2026

[Note: This bill was double referred from the Assembly Arts, Entertainment, Sports & Tourism Committee and was heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]

SUBJECT: California Interscholastic Federation: pupil health: heat illness: guidelines

SUMMARY: Requires the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) by July 1, 2027 and annually thereafter to review and update as necessary the guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for the prevention and management of exertional heat illness, with special consideration for regions of the state with higher average temperatures.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires no later than July 1, 2024, the CIF, in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE), to develop guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for the prevention and management of exertional heat illness. (Education Code (EC) 35179.8)
- 2) Requires guidelines developed to identify the environmental conditions at which a school shall limit and prohibit practice and play. (EC 35179.8)
- 3) Requires the guidelines include information regarding the accurate measurement of environmental heat stress at the site of the athletic activity, including the use of wet bulb globe thermometer (WBGT) to determine ambient temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, and solar radiation from the sun, including sun angle and cloud cover. (EC 35179.8)
- 4) Requires the guidelines developed to identify the environmental conditions at which a school shall have a method to institute whole-body cooling to treat a student athlete with exertional heat illness, especially heat stroke, that is easily accessible at all practice and contest venues. (EC 35179.8)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill was keyed nonfiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Coaches, athletic directors, administrators, and parents throughout my district have expressed strong support for an initiative to update the CIF Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) guidelines. High school sports practices have been forced late into the evening or early morning to meet compliance. Meeting compliance has disrupted family routines, created logistical and transportation issues, led to burn out and fatigue, and negatively impacted student-athlete academic performance. Living in California’s desert communities presents a unique kind of acclimatization. With the enhanced safety measures that come with this proposal, adjusting the current guidelines will allow for more practices to stay on schedule, continue ensuring safe and fun sports participation, and help student athletes maintain strong academic performance, family structure, and avoid burn out.”

Emergency action plans. Existing law requires, if a school district or charter school elects to offer any interscholastic athletic program, the governing board of the school district or the governing body of the charter school to ensure that there is a written emergency action plan in place that describes the location and procedures to be followed in the event of sudden cardiac arrest and other medical emergencies related to the athletic program's activities or events. Current law requires the written emergency action plan to be posted in compliance with the most recent pertinent guidelines of the National Federation of State High School Associations. This bill adds heat stroke to the list of items included in the written emergency action plan.

CIF Practice/play policy using wet bulb globe thermometer readings. CIF, in consultation with the CDE, has developed guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for monitoring the safety of practice and play when WBGT readings reach specified levels, and requires the governing board of the school district or the governing body of the charter school to ensure that there is a written emergency action plan in place that describes the location and procedures to be followed in the event of heat illness related to the athletic program's activities or events.

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), WBGT is a measure of heat stress in direct sunlight that takes into account temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle, and cloud cover (solar radiation). This differs from the heat index, which takes into consideration temperature and humidity and is calculated for shady areas. Using a WBGT monitor on-site provides more accurate data than that from the NWS and can help athletic programs to dictate modifications in activity (work/rest ratios, hydration breaks, equipment work, length of practice) that make sports safer for all participants.

Research indicates that when establishing WBGT guidelines for physical activity, the guidelines must be geographically specific. Researchers have established heat safety regions to address the differences in heat acclimation among residents in these areas. Thus, the first step for schools is to determine which geographic category applies to their location.



To the left is a map of the California heat safety zones (the darkest section is Region Category 3) matched to the CIF Sections that can be used to read the activity guideline chart. The next step is to match the WBGT reading with the activity guidelines in the chart below:

CIF guidance also provides direction on acclimatization for high school athletes to help them adapt to hot weather conditions and reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses. These include gradual increases in activity, adequate hydration, modifying practice schedules for cooler times of day, and monitoring athlete health to identify signs of heat-related illness.

Cat 3	Cat 2	Cat 1	Outdoor Activity Guidelines
<82.0°F <27.8°C	<79.7°F <26.5°C	<76.1°F <24.5°C	Normal Activities – Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 min each during the workout.
82.2 - 86.9°F 27.9 - 30.5°C	79.9 - 84.6°F 26.6 - 29.2°C	76.3 - 81.0°F 24.6 - 27.2°C	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each.
87.1 - 90.0°F 30.6 - 32.2°C	84.7 - 87.6°F 29.3 - 30.9°C	81.1 - 84.0°F 27.3 - 28.9°C	Maximum outdoor practice time is 2 h. Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each. For Football/Field Hockey: players are restricted to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice. If the WBGT rises to this level during practice, players may continue to work out wearing full pads without changing to shorts.
90.1 - 91.9°F 32.2 - 33.3°C	87.8 - 89.6°F 31.0 - 32.0°C	84.2 - 86.0°F 29.0 - 30.0°C	Contests are permitted with additional hydration breaks. Maximum outdoor practice time is 1 h. No protective equipment may be worn during practice, and there may be no conditioning activities. There must be 20 min of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.
≥92.1°F ≥33.4°C	≥89.8°F ≥32.1°C	≥86.2°F ≥30.1°C	No outdoor workouts/contests. Delay practice/competitions until a cooler WBGT is reached.

What are other states doing? Georgia adopted a policy regarding practice guidelines using WBGT readings in 2012, and all Georgia Independent School Association Interscholastic Member Schools are required to comply. Georgia requires the following hydration and rest break guidelines based on wet bulb globe thermometer readings:

- **Under 82.0: Normal activities.** Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour of a minimum duration of 3 minutes each during practice.
- **82.0 – 86.9: Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise.** Watch at-risk students carefully. Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour of a minimum of four minutes duration each during practice.
- **87.0 – 89.9: Maximum outdoor Practice time is two hours.** For football, students are restricted to helmets, 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 during practice.
- **90.0 – 92.0: Maximum outdoor Practice time is one hour.** No protective equipment may be worn during outdoor practice, and there may be no outdoor conditioning activities. There must be twenty minutes of rest breaks provided during the hour of outdoor practice.
- **Over 92: No outdoor activities or exercise.** Delay outdoor practice until a lower WBGT reading occurs.

The Georgia policy further specifies:

- The following guidelines apply to hydration and rest breaks:
 - Rest time should involve both unlimited hydration (water or electrolyte drinks) and rest without any activity involved.
 - For football, helmets should be removed during rest time.
 - The site of the rest time should be a cooling zone, not in direct sunlight, such as indoors, under a tent, or under a shade tree.
 - When the WBGT is over 86, ice towels and spray bottles filled with ice water should be available in the cooling zone, and cold immersion tubs shall be available for a student showing signs of heat illness. A cold immersion tub may be anything, including a shower or wading pool that can be adapted to immerse a student in cold water and ice, which is available within two minutes travel from an outdoor practice facility.

- The following guidelines apply to practice:
 - All Member Schools must hold Acclimatization Activities.
 - No two-a-day practices may exceed four hours for both sessions; no single practice during two-a-days may exceed two hours. A three hour rest period must be observed between the two sessions.
 - No single practice may last more than three hours.
 - Restrictions based on outdoor WBGT readings do not apply to indoor practice where indoor air temperature is 85 degrees or less.

Coaches training. Currently, CIF offers training programs to high school coaches who receive a certificate upon course completion. The completed certificate is transferable between school districts. CIF's mandated coaches training program under the High School Coaches Training Program (HSCTP) currently includes instruction on CPR, First Aid, and concussions, sudden cardiac arrest, and heat acclimation.

CIF offers a free online concussion training course for coaches where they receive an immediate printed certification upon completion. The free CIF online training course in heat illness prevention includes sections that explore the principles of Heat Illness Awareness, Adequate Hydration, Gradual Acclimatization, Hydration Status Record Keeping, and offers Additional Prevention Measures. Currently, coaches must complete a CPR/First Aid/Concussion course and renew that training every two years. This applies to all CIF member schools, public and private.

Arguments in support. The Small School Districts' Association states, "Currently, student athletic activities must be postponed if ambient temperatures reach over 92.1°F. In many parts of our state, however, particularly in inland valleys, the Central Valley, and Southern California, temperatures frequently exceed this threshold during the prime months of the athletic season. Many of our small and rural school districts exist in these areas, and students in these schools are disproportionately impacted by the current policy. As a result, these student athletes are routinely denied the opportunity to participate in practices and competitions that are essential to their physical development, college recruitment prospects, and personal well-being. The proposed increase to 93.5°F is modest and would only be allowed under the bill if certain safety measures are also implemented. These measures would include but not be limited to: mandatory hydration breaks every 15 minutes, reduced practice intensity and duration, onsite monitoring by trained personnel for signs of heat illness, enhanced heat acclimatization protocols, and availability of shaded rest areas and cooling measures."

Arguments in opposition. The Climate Reality Project Los Angeles states, "Both National Weather Service (NWS) WBGT and onsite WBGT are allowed under the CIF regulations. NSW readings are generally lower than onsite WBGTs, and both provide temperature readings that are significantly lower than surface temperature readings. This is significant as neither NWS or onsite WBGT temperatures provide a full picture of the threat of heat on synthetic turf fields. Research has shown that synthetic turf surface heat creates heat islands, increases the risk of thermal burns, raises body temperature allowing for increased dermal absorption of toxic and cancer causing chemicals; increases off gassing of toxic chemicals; increases respiratory rates and inhalation of chemicals; decreases cognitive function, which can lead to increased injuries; raises core body temperature leading to risk of exertional heat illness, heat stroke, and death. This bill would potentially impose significantly elevated health risks to athletes, coaches, staff and observers due to extreme heat. Not all coaches, students and staff have grown up in the extreme desert region, and an untold number are not acclimated to the climate, and neither are visiting teams, coaches, and parents traveling into the Category 3 region for competitions."

Related legislation. AB 1653 (Sanchez), Chapter 589, Statutes of 2023, requires the CIF, in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE), to develop guidelines, procedures and safety standards for monitoring the safety of practice and play when wet bulb globe thermometer (WBGT) readings reach specified levels, no later than July 1, 2024; and requires the governing board of the school district or the governing body of the charter school to ensure that there is a written emergency action plan in place that describes the location and procedures to be followed in the event of heat illness related to the athletic program's activities or events.

AB 245 (McKinnor) of the 2023-24 Session would require the High School Coaching Education and Training Program to include training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of cardiac arrest.

AB 1327 (Weber) of the 2023-24 Session would require CIF to report to the Legislature annually; requires the CIF report to include instances of hate violence; and, requires CIF to develop, in consultation with community organizations that represent the interests of ethnic groups and communities of color, a standardized incident form to track hate violence that occurs at high school sporting games or sporting events, and annually post those results on their website.

AB 2800 (Chu), Chapter 21, Statutes of 2021, adds basic understanding of the signs and symptoms of, and appropriate responses to, heat illness, to the training component of the 1998 HSCTP.

AB 2009 (Maienschein), Chapter 646, Statutes of 2018, requires, commencing July 1, 2019 that any school district or charter school which offers any interscholastic athletic program, must ensure that there is an emergency action plan in place that describes the location and procedures to be followed in the event of sudden cardiac arrest or other medical emergencies related to the athletic program's activities or events, and acquire at least one AED for each school within the school district or the charter school, for the purpose of rendering emergency care or treatment, as specified. The bill would also expressly state that an employee is not liable for civil damages resulting from the rendering of emergency care or treatment pursuant to the bill's provisions, except as provided, nor a public school, school district, or charter school, except as provided.

AB 141 (Hayashi), Chapter 173, Statutes of 2012, adds requirements to the California High School Coaching Education and Training Program (HSCTP) for training on understanding the signs and symptoms of concussions and the appropriate response to concussions.

AB 1646 (Hayashi) of the 2009-10 Session would have required training for coaches to be able to identify symptoms of head and neck injury. The additional training would have been incorporated into coaches' first aid certification renewal. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1893 (Hayashi) of the 2009-10 Session would have required all high school spirit activities (HSSA) coaches to have valid certification in CPR and first aid, including an understanding of signs, symptoms, and appropriate emergency action steps regarding potentially catastrophic injury, including but not limited to, head and neck injury and concussion. Pupils participating in HSSA who experience or show signs of trauma or other injury would have needed to obtain a release from the treating provider before resuming spirit activities. This bill was held in the Assembly Education Committee.

AB 533 (Hayashi) of the 2009-10 Session would have required training for coaches to be able to identify symptoms of head and neck injury. The training would have been incorporated into coaches' first aid certification renewal. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 2741 (Miller) Chapter 744, Statutes of 1998, establishes the 1998 California High School Coaching and Education Program to be administered by school districts and to emphasize, among other things, sport psychology, sport pedagogy, sport physiology, CPR, and first aid.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Desert Empire League
Palm Desert High School
Rancho Mirage Hs Football
Small School Districts Association
Xavier College Preparatory High School

Opposition

Beyond Plastics

Cleanearth4kids.org

Climate Reality Project, Los Angeles Chapter

Climate Reality San Fernando Valley, CA Chapter

Mothers Out Front National

Mothers Out Front Silicon Valley

Non-toxic Communities

North County Climate Change Alliance

Safe Healthy Playing Fields, INC.

San Diegans for Sustainable, Equitable, & Quiet Equipment in Landscaping

Socal Stop Artificial Turf Task Force

West Coast Turf

Analysis Prepared by: Chelsea Kelley / ED. / (916) 319-2087