

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2503 (Wallis)

As Amended April 13, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

AB 2503 requires the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to annually review and update as necessary their policies on the prevention and management of exertional heat illness.

Major Provisions

On or before July 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, CIF shall 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.

COMMENTS

Background. CIF, in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE), has developed guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for monitoring the safety of practice and play when Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (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), a Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) is a measure of the heat stress in direct sunlight, which 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 right 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.

According to the Author

"Coaches, athletic directors, administrators, and parents throughout my district have expressed strong support for an initiative to update the CIF 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."

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 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

Cat 3	Cat 2	Cat 1	Outdoor Activity Guidelines
<81.0°F	<79.0°F	<65.0°F	Normal Activities - Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 min each during the workout.
81.2 - 86.0°F	79.5 - 84.6°F	76.3 - 81.0°F	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each.
87.5 - 92.0°F	85.5 - 89.0°F	81.5 - 84.0°F	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.
93.5 - 98.0°F	91.5 - 94.0°F	87.0 - 90.0°F	Continued as a permitted with additional 15 min rest 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 30 min of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.
≥98.0°F	≥96.0°F	≥93.0°F	No outdoor workouts/contests. Delay practice/competitions until a cooler WBGT is reached.

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."

FISCAL COMMENTS

None. This bill was keyed nonfiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

VOTES

ASM ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM: 7-0-2

YES: Ward, Lackey, Elhawary, Jeff Gonzalez, Ortega, Valencia, Zbur

ABS, ABST OR NV: McKinnor, Quirk-Silva

ASM EDUCATION: 9-0-0

YES: Patel, Hoover, Alvarez, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Pellerin, Zbur

UPDATED

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