
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 2503
Author: Wallis (R)
Amended: 4/13/26 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/10/26

AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Menjivar, Reyes

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-0, 5/11/26 - See last page for vote

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

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires, by July 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) 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.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the CIF, in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE), to develop, by July 1, 2024, guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for the prevention and management of exertional heat illness. (Education Code (EC) § 35179.8)
- 2) Requires the guidelines 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 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)
- 5) Requires, if a school district or charter school elects to offer any interscholastic athletic program, the governing board of a school district or the governing body of a charter school to ensure that there is a written emergency action plan in place that describes the location of emergency medical equipment and procedures to be followed in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest and other medical emergencies, including concussion and heat illness, related to the athletic program's activities or events. (EC § 35179.4)
- 6) States it is the intent of the Legislature that the California High School Coaching Education and Training Program emphasize a training component that includes certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, use of an automated external defibrillator, and first aid that includes, but is not limited to, training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of, and responding to, concussions, heat illness, and cardiac arrest. Defines "heat illness" as including heat cramps, heat syncope, heat exhaustion, and exertional heat stroke. (EC § 35179.1)

This bill:

- 1) Requires, by July 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the CIF 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.
- 2) Makes findings and declarations related to balancing temperature thresholds for outdoor practices and contests against the disruption and logistical challenges caused by late evening practices.

Comments

Need for the bill. According to the author, "In 2024, youth sports in America lost an estimated one week of practice or competition due to extreme heat, wildfires,

flooding, smoke, or harsh winters. California had the most missed days of any state. ... Existing law requires the CIF, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to develop guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for the prevention and management of exertional heat illness. ... For students in Region Category 3, California's deserts and valleys, the current Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) threshold of 92.1, set by the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), is overly restrictive.

Coaches, athletic directors, administrators, and parents throughout my district have expressed strong support for an initiative to update the CIF Wet Bulb Globe Temperature guidelines. High School sports practices have been forced late into the evening or early morning to meet compliance. Long days have disrupted family routines, created logistical and transportation issues, led to burn out and fatigue, and negatively impacted student-athlete academic and athletic performance. Living in California's desert communities presents a unique kind of acclimatization. A one size fits all threshold does not work for my communities. By requiring CIF to annually review and update, if deemed necessary, the heat thresholds for youth sports, we will solve a significant problem for many high schools in my district."

CIF's structure and role in interscholastic athletics. The CIF, founded in 1914, is a voluntary organization consisting of over 1,600 public, public charter, and private high schools and over 750,000 student-athletes, for the purpose of governing education-based athletics in grades 9 through 12. Almost all public and private high schools in California are CIF members. The CIF is organized under CDE, and CDE has allowed the CIF to regulate interscholastic athletics and be the rulemaking body for these programs.

The CIF consists of ten regional sections, each of which is divided into several local leagues, for purposes of developing sports, scheduling athletic contests, and assigning referees. Each league elects a representative to their respective CIF section's governing body, which is called a Board of Managers or Council. Each CIF section's governing body elects officers, establishes section policies, develops section playoff sports and schedules, and CIF members adhere to these rules and regulations adopted by their section.

Training on heat illness for coaches. Currently, CIF offers training programs to high school coaches who earn a certificate upon course completion that is transferable between school districts. These training programs are part of the California High School Coaching Education and Training Program and currently include instruction on CPR and first aid, concussions, sudden cardiac arrest, and

heat illness. According to CIF's website, coaches who are part of CIF member schools must complete these training courses every two years.

WBGT as a measure of heat stress. According to the National Weather Service, the 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.” The WBGT is seen as particularly valuable in environments where people are physically active, such as sports, because it provides a better assessment of the risk of heat-related conditions during physical exertion.

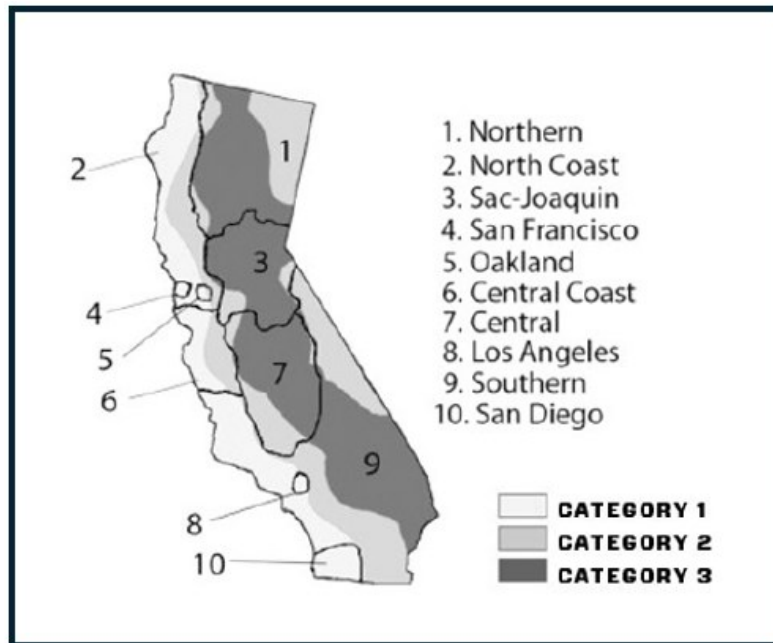
The Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment, and Sustainability at Duke University provides the following example of how WBGT readings can vary depending on multiple environmental inputs. In this example, higher humidity and slower wind leads to a higher WBGT reading despite a lower temperature:

	Temperature	Humidity	Wind	WBGT
Day 1	95°	25%	4 mph	85.3°
Day 2	85°	50%	2 mph	88.1°

Follow-up on 2023 legislation addressing heat-related deaths for student athletes. In response to concerns about heat illness as a leading cause of death for student athletes, AB 1653 (Sanchez, Chapter 589, Statutes of 2023) required the CIF, in consultation with CDE, develop guidelines, procedures, and safety standards, by July 1, 2024, for the prevention and management of exertional heat illness. The legislation required the guidelines to include information about the accurate measurement of environmental heat stress at the site of athletic activity, which included the use of WBGT.

The guidelines developed by CIF pursuant to AB 1653 divides the state into three geographic areas, with coastal areas in Region Category 1, slightly inland areas in Region Category 2, and hotter and drier inland areas in Region Category 3. (See the graphic below from 2024 CIF report that shows the three Region Categories.) The report indicates that practices and games must be canceled, or delayed, when WBGT readings exceed the following: 86.2 degrees for Region Category 1; 89.9 degrees for Region Category 2; and 92 degrees for Region Category 3. It's important to note that a WBGT reading is usually lower than from outside air temperature. CIF also provides outdoor activity guidelines on rest breaks, outdoor

practice time, and the protective equipment that should be shed depending on the WBGT reading for a given region.



Given the author's concerns about the CIF guidelines being overly restrictive or leading to unintended consequences, this bill requires CIF to annually review, and update as necessary, the guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for the prevention and management of exertional heat illness for the three regions outlined in the 2024 guidelines.

Related/Prior Legislation

SB 1248 (Hurtado, Chapter 463, Statutes of 2024) requires CDE to compile and post on its website standardized guidelines that would trigger modifications to student physical activities during extreme weather conditions.

AB 1653 (Sanchez, Chapter 589, Statutes of 2023) requires the CIF, in consultation with the CDE, to develop guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for monitoring the safety of practice and play when WBGT readings reach specified levels, no later than July 1, 2024. The bill also 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, Chapter 422, Statutes of 2023) adds to the California High School Coaching Education and Training Program, by July 1, 2024, a training component in recognizing and responding to the signs and symptoms of concussions, heat illness, and cardiac arrest.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 6/10/26)

Small School Districts Association
The California Baptist Capitol Ministry

OPPOSITION: (Verified 6/10/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-0, 5/11/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Ramos, Ransom, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Bonta, Bryan, Lee, Lowenthal, Quirk-Silva, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Solache, Soria

Prepared by: Michelle Nguyen / ED. / (916) 651-4105
6/12/26 12:50:13

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