



Race Director Fact Sheet Number 17:

Medical Advice - Cold Weather

Cold or Wet Weather

Poor weather can occur within the UK and Ireland during any time of the year and advanced plans need to be implemented to minimise the impact this has on participants and spectators.

The NHS website has lots of information on hypothermia and its appropriate management which is as applicable in the running setting as it is anywhere else.

“Hypothermia happens when a person's body temperature drops below 35°C (95°F). Normal body temperature is around 37°C (98.6°F).

Hypothermia can quickly become life threatening and should be treated as a medical emergency.

It is usually caused by being in a cold environment and can be triggered by a combination of things – such as being outdoors in cold conditions for a long time or falling into cold water.

Anyone who spends long periods outside during the winter without wearing appropriate warm clothing can also be at risk, particularly after drinking large amounts of alcohol.

Signs of hypothermia

The signs of hypothermia vary depending on how low a person's temperature has dropped.

Initial symptoms include shivering, tiredness, fast breathing and cold or pale skin.

As the temperature drops, shivering becomes more violent (although this will stop completely if the hypothermia worsens further), the person is likely to become delirious, struggle to breathe or move and they may lose consciousness.

If someone you know has been exposed to the cold and they are distressed, confused, have slow, shallow breathing or they're unconscious, they may have severe hypothermia.

Helping someone with hypothermia

While waiting for medical help, it is important to try to prevent further heat loss and gently warm the person. You should:

- Move the person indoors or somewhere warm as soon as possible.
- Once somewhere warm, carefully remove any wet clothing and dry the person.
- Wrap them in fabric blankets, towels or coats. (Taken from NHS Website) EA

Recommendations:

From one week before the event is due to take place, the event/race director and the medical provider should look at the long range forecast from a number of websites. This process should be repeated daily up until event day

Looking at the real feel temperature rather than the air temperature will give a more realistic prediction of what the athletes (and those involved in managing the event) will feel on event day. It should be remembered that cold weather will not just affect the participants, but also stewards, volunteers, medical team etc.

If the Met Office has issued warnings regarding the temperature, then the organisers should pay particular attention to those warnings. Cancellation, postponement or alternations to the event distance or timings should be considered in these instances.

If the long-range forecast (1 week or less) is of concern regarding the potential risk for hypothermia, then the following actions shall be put in place/considered.

- 1) The event should send out emails to participants, and to place information on social media (in advance) warning of the expected cold weather, to advise people to dress warmly on arrival and to have warm clothes to change into after the event.
- 2) Heaters to be placed in all static medical posts.
- 3) The number of fabric blankets for distribution amongst the medical resource locations should be increased
- 4) The use of foil blankets should be discouraged unless being used as a rain or wind shelter due to their insulating effect when cold. Foil blankets may be used over the top of a warm, dry layer.
- 5) Volunteers should be briefed by the organisers to encourage finishers/cold participants to change into warm dry clothes they have, and to purchase a hot drink to aid rewarming.
- 6) Consider adding in additional volunteers to aid the collection of warm clothing from bag drop for participants in the medical tent.
- 7) Anyone found to be cold should be encouraged to keep moving if possible. If they unable to rewarm themselves, then they should be taken to the nearest medical post for rewarming. If this is not possible due to injury or illness, they should be sheltered from any wind or rain if possible and medical assistance should be called for.
- 8) Shelter in the start area for participants and spectators should be considered and in extreme weather there should be heated areas available.
- 9) For every predicted degree below 11 degrees centigrade (real feel temperature) an additional first aider should be added to the resourcing plan
- 10) If the predicted real feel temperature is below 11 degrees centigrade then an extra paramedic should be added to the medical resourcing plan.
- 11) If the predicted real feel temperature is below 11 degrees centigrade then an extra blue light capable ambulance should be considered (depending on the course length and number of participants)
- 12) The event should aim to avoid holding people too long while waiting for the warmup, and to release them to start the race as soon as possible after