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URGENT SAFETY ADVICE - CLIMATIC ILLNESS AND INJURY AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

1. The Defence Safety Authority has identified through a combination of on-going Service Inquiries and reported occurrences that there are potential significant deficiencies in the awareness and management of climatic illness and injury across the Armed Forces and Cadet Forces organisations.
2. Every year there are significant impacts on health and sometimes deaths as a result of heat and cold injuries. These are nearly all preventable, provided the risk factors are assessed properly and appropriately managed. This prevention requires greater awareness of the risk by commanders at all levels, training in assessment of the risk and putting in place the right control measures. In addition, the impact of a climatic injury may be reduced if appropriate first aid measures and evacuation to medical care are carried out effectively and promptly.
3. The aim of this Urgent Safety Advice is to remind all Armed Forces and Cadet Force personnel of the sources of information and risk assessments to be undertaken in order to assist in the prevention and treatment of cases of heat illness (and cold injury) thereby reducing the risks associated with these preventable conditions occurring.
4. There are many associated risks with physical / military and cadet training in differing climatic conditions and the subsequent dangers relating to heat illness and injury. The single source of authority on this subject is JSP 539 – Climatic Illness and Injury in the Armed Forces: Force Protection and Initial Medical Treatment v2.4 (dated 19 Aug 14). As a reminder this document replaces Land Forces Standing Order (LFSO) 3214 dated Apr 08 that was withdrawn in 2013. Other current documents available with regards to climatic illness include; An Individual's Guide to Climatic Injury, A Commander's Guide to Climatic Injury and Commanders' Physical Development Aide Memoire. All of these documents use JSP 539 as the authoritative source document and are available via the Defence Intranet via the embedded links or through the Directorate of Army Training - Physical Development¹ web page.

¹<http://defenceintranet.dif.r.mil.uk/Organisations/Orgs/Army/Organisations/Orgs/ctdt/Organisations/Orgs/DTrgA/phydev/Pages/PhysicalTraining.aspx>

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5. The following information is listed to remind all units of additional measures that can be implemented when planning PT related activities during periods of hot weather:

- a. Ensure a thorough Risk Assessment (RA) is completed for the activity as detailed in JSP 375 – Management of Health and Safety in Defence; Part 2 Volume 1; Chapter 40 Military Training for Land Systems (Dec 14) utilising MOD Form 5015.
- b. Once the RA is completed and the residual risk is acceptable having taking in to account all existing control measures, the RA should then be signed and dated by the officer in charge of the exercise or activity. If however the residual risk is not acceptable, then further control measures should be identified, if the risks are then acceptable then the officer in charge of the exercise or activity is to sign and date the RA. When the residual risk remains after further control measures have been identified then the activity must not continue unless approved by the appropriate Duty Holder².
- c. Where it is assessed there may be an elevated risk of heat illness, commanders are to ensure that Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) monitors are readily available wherever possible and used correctly in order to inform the proactive and dynamic application of risk management procedures. **WBGT readings alone should not be used as the only indicator of risk or as a go/no-go** and should only be used as a tool to inform a commander's risk assessment. WBGT readings may rise quickly which could lead to a given activity continuing when it is no longer safe to do so. Therefore consideration should be given to checking WBGT periodically throughout an activity.
- d. The requirement to hydrate prior, during and after activities is crucial and should be managed by commanders at all levels (additional water should be made available). Clear guidance on hydration can be found in JPS 539 Chapter 2 Annex B. Attention is drawn to the colour of urine and the education of this subject to personnel.
- e. Where suspected cases of heat illness occurs the Immediate Treatment Algorithm iaw JSP 539 Fig 2.1 should be followed.
- f. Assess the requirement, if any, for the wearing of PPE (ie helmets, CBRN assemblies etc), as this can exacerbate the onset and severity of heat injuries.
- g. Ensure that the WBGT Index Threshold values listed in JSP 539 are adhered to.
- h. Where units rely on a third party (Med Centre, Garrison Gymnasium, etc) to collect and distribute WBGT readings then units are to take ownership for obtaining these WBGT readings prior to the activity taking place. Be aware that the risk remains with the unit conducting the activity.
- i. Ensure WBGT monitors have been calibrated as detailed in JSP 539 para 2A2-3 and operated by personnel qualified to provide the necessary advice to the Chain of Command during the risk assessment process.
- j. Units that do not hold WBGT monitors must seek the guidance listed in JSP 539 Chapter 2 in order to procure the monitor through Service sources.
- k. CESO's are to ensure that Commanding Officers are made aware of the policy detailed in JSP 539.

² i.e the individual who is personally responsible and accountable (normally of OF4-5 rank as the Delivery Duty Holder) for the Risk-to-Life associated with the planned activity.

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6. For those unable to access the Defence Intranet alternative internet sources of the documents are at the links below:

- a. A Commander's Guide To Climatic Injury.
- b. An Individual's Guide To Climatic Injury.
- c. JSP 539 - Climatic Illness and Injury in the Armed Forces v2.4 (dated 19 Aug 14).

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