



THE MANAGEMENT OF MEDICAL EMERGENCIES & INJURIES IN COMMUNITY AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

Introduction

The AFL expects that Australian football matches at all levels will be played in good quality environments and the safety of participants is central to this. As part of a risk management approach to the prevention of, and prompt attention to injuries in Australian football, it is important that adequate and timely first aid is provided. Sports trainers and first aiders have been part of Australian football since the origins of the game. They are part of the fabric of every club and play a key role in player preparation and safety at all levels.

In community Australian football clubs, first aid is usually provided by sports trainers or by other volunteers with medical or allied health (e.g. nursing, physiotherapy, occupational health & safety) qualifications and experience. It is important that sports trainers, and others, are well trained in the first aid needs specifically relevant to Australian football at the level at which they are involved (e.g. Auskick, juniors, youth, seniors, talent pathway, AFL clubs, veterans etc).

A sports trainer or first aid provider involved with a football club or team should have a clear understanding of the role and importance of injury prevention and immediate emergency and injury management in football. They should be aware of their responsibilities in relation to first aid equipment and facilities, and their obligations in relation to duty of care and record keeping.

Planning and practising what to do when an emergency occurs is an essential part of risk management. All football leagues and clubs must be conversant with first aid procedures and able to deal with emergencies, so participants are well supported.

Minimum Requirements

All leagues and clubs must ensure that:

- At least one person with the appropriate minimum qualifications displayed in Table 1 below is available at all Australian football games and training sessions.
- An appropriately and adequately stocked first aid kit and well maintained sport-specific rescue/transport equipment are accessible at all training and competition venues.

Qualified Level 1 or 2 Sports Trainers¹ meet or exceed the minimum requirements of this policy. A qualified medical practitioner, paramedic, physiotherapist, osteopath, chiropractor, registered nurse or firefighter with first aid competencies and suitable sports experience also meet the policy requirements.

At a minimum, at least one person competent in emergency management procedures and responses must attend all matches/competitions and training/practice sessions. This person must be competent in²:

¹ Qualification must be recognised by the AFL

² These competencies are met in both Level 1 Sports Trainer and AFL approved Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) courses

1. Emergency planning

Including but not limited to:

- Ensuring access to a telephone and calling an ambulance if required.
- Venue access for emergency vehicles.
- Access to appropriate and adequate first aid equipment and supplies.

2. Understanding emergency response priorities and applying emergency procedures

- The **DRSABCD** procedure - **D**anger, **R**esponse, **S**end for help, **A**irway, **B**reathing, and **C**PR and **D**efibrillation.

3. Assessment of injured participants

- Application of **STOP** (**S**top, **T**alk, **O**bserve, **P**revent) and **TOTAPS** (**T**alk, **O**bserve, **T**ouch, **A**ctive movement, **P**assive movement & **S**kills).
- Immediate management of severe injuries and life-threatening medical emergencies, including but not limited to:
 - spinal & neck injuries
 - intracranial (brain) injuries & concussion (definition, causes, signs and management)
 - unconscious casualties
 - airway/respiratory distress such as choking, airway obstructions & asthma.
- Management of open wounds and application of the blood rule.
- Soft tissue injury management and application of **RICER** (**R**est, **I**ce, **C**ompression, **E**levation, **R**eferral) with no harm.

4. On-field and off-field communication

- Liaising with the umpire and others in official capacities.
- Visible and clearly understood signals used for emergency and injury management.
- Ensuring team work and understanding roles and responsibilities.
- Liaising with health professionals, coaches, staff and parents/guardians.
- Appropriate and accurate documentation.

5. Transporting injured participants

- Lifts, carries and use of an appropriate stretcher (pole and scoop).

Key Policy Directives

There must be at least one person with the above competencies in attendance at all Senior and Youth matches and training sessions, otherwise the activity should be postponed, rescheduled or cancelled until such time as a suitably competent person is able to attend.

At AFL Auskick sessions and Junior matches (up to Under 12), a person with a current, nationally accredited first aid certificate³ will be acceptable if someone with a higher-level trainer accreditation/qualification is not available. Refer to Table 1 below for a summary of AFL Requirements.

The AFL is committed to supporting leagues, clubs and teams in their efforts to meet the requirements of this policy, and has created an Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC)

³ Must include assessed competencies HLTAID003 (Provide First Aid)

Course to meet minimum trainer standards. This half-day course delivered by AFL approved organisations is available Australia wide.

Table 1: Summary of AFL requirements for matches and training

| <i>Level (Age)</i> | <i>AFL/AFLW</i> | <i>State League</i> | <i>Senior (18+)</i> | <i>Youth (13-17)</i> | <i>Auskick/Junior (5-12)</i> |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Recommended: | Level 2 Sports Trainer | Level 2 Sports Trainer | Sports Trainer (Level 1 or 2) | Sports Trainer (Level 1 or 2) | Sports Trainer (Level 1 or 2) |
| Minimum: | | Level 1 Sports Trainer | ERC | ERC | First Aid |

ERC: Emergency Response Coordinator