

Rehearsal Scenario: Response to a Catastrophic Injury with Athletic Trainer Not On Scene – Exertional Heat Stroke

Scenario Overview:

This rehearsal is designed to simulate the emergency response to an athlete collapsing with exertional heat stroke during a sporting event when the Athletic Trainer (AT) is on school premises but not immediately present at the scene. The goal is to ensure all stakeholders are familiar with the Emergency Action Plan (EAP), can perform their roles effectively, and can work together seamlessly to provide immediate and appropriate care until the AT arrives.

Participants:

- Coaches
- Players
- Event Staff/Security
- School Administration
- Team Physicians (if available)
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Personnel
- Athletic Trainer (AT) (arriving partway through the scenario)

Scenario Details:

- Event: High School Track and Field Meet
- Location: School Track
- Injury: Athlete collapses on the track with suspected exertional heat stroke.

Step-by-Step Rehearsal:

1. Initial Response (Time Frame: Immediate (0-1 minute))

Coach:

- Witnesses the athlete collapse and rushes to the athlete.
- Quickly assesses the situation for responsiveness and symptoms of heat stroke (e.g., hot, profuse sweating, confusion, unconsciousness).
- Shouts for help, indicating a medical emergency (e.g., “Athlete down! Possible heat stroke!”).

Assistant Coach/Designated Staff Member:

- Dials 911, providing clear details: nature of the injury, location, and access points.
- Sends a runner to immediately inform the Athletic Trainer and bring them to the scene.

2. Immediate On-Scene Care (Time Frame: Immediate (1-2 minutes))

Coach:

- Moves the athlete to a cooler, shaded area if possible.
- Begins immediate cooling strategies: removing excess clothing and applying cold, wet towels or ice packs to the entire body.
- Directs other staff members or players to retrieve a cold-water immersion tub or set up the cold-water immersion tub.

Developed with assistance from ChatGPT – Prompt – “Write a rehearsal scenario for an organization to run through if an athletic trainer is present at the school but not on scene and a patient collapses with exertional heat stroke”

Developed as a sample document based on the NATA Position Statement: Emergency Action Plan Development and Implementation (2024) by the author group. This document is provided for illustrative purposes only.

Event Staff/Security:

- Ensure the ambulance access route is clear.
- Direct EMS to the scene upon arrival.

Assistant Coach:

- Retrieves cooling supplies and assists the coach in cooling the athlete.

3. Continued Cooling and Monitoring (Time Frame: Immediate (2-5 minutes))

Coach:

- Continues cooling the athlete using the most effective means available (e.g., cold water immersion).
- Monitors the athlete's vital signs and level of consciousness.

Team Members/Additional Staff:

- Assist as needed, ensuring the area is safe and clear for emergency personnel.

4. Arrival of the Athletic Trainer (Time Frame: Within 5 minutes)

Athletic Trainer (upon arrival):

- Takes over the cooling and monitoring efforts.
- Continues to provide advanced first aid, checking vital signs (including rectal temperature) and ensuring the athlete is cooling effectively.
- Prepares for EMS handover, providing relevant medical information and updates. *EMS handover does not occur until patient has reached core body temperature of 102°F.

5. Arrival of EMS (Time Frame: Within 5-10 minutes)

EMS Personnel:

- Take over advanced care upon arrival.
- Continue or enhance cooling measures and prepare the athlete for transport.
- Transport the athlete to the nearest medical facility once stabilized.

6. Post-Incident Procedures (Time Frame: After EMS Departure)

Athletic Trainer and School Administration:

- Document the incident, including actions taken and the athlete's response.
- Conduct a debriefing session with all involved parties to review the response and identify areas for improvement.

Coaches and Event Staff:

- Communicate with the athlete's family and provide necessary updates.
- Ensure emotional and psychological support is available for teammates and staff.

7. Review and Evaluation (Time Frame: Within 24-48 hours post-rehearsal)

- Conduct a formal debriefing session with all participants.
- Discuss what went well and identify areas needing improvement.
- Update the EAP based on feedback from the rehearsal.

Checklist for Rehearsal:

- Coaches demonstrate immediate assessment and response skills for heat stroke.
- Communication pathways are clear and effective (e.g., calling 911, informing the AT).
- Cooling supplies (e.g., ice packs, cold towels, immersion tub) are accessible and used correctly.
- Area is cleared efficiently, and EMS has clear access.
- Athletic Trainer arrives promptly and takes over emergency care effectively.
- Documentation and debriefing procedures are followed.

EXAMPLE