

Cold Weather Advice for Race Events

This information is presented to Lappe members to help them make informed decisions about participating in race events to avoid negative outcomes due to cold weather.

Skiing in cold temperatures is possible if an individual is dressed properly without exposed skin and does not allow him/herself to become chilled enough to lower body temperature to hypothermia levels. Racing in cold temperatures creates its own issues. Wind makes matters worse as the skin will freeze more quickly as the moving air will wick away heat more readily and penetrate clothing more easily. Racers actually add to the wind chill effect by moving more quickly through the surrounding air.

Additionally, prolonged exposure to cold air, particularly while undertaking hard aerobic activities, may well have the potential to damage the lungs. This suggestion is supported by several studies of Scandinavian elite cross-country skiers, which found a high incidence of asthma amongst such athletes when compared to the population as a whole.

Like the Inuit who learned how to live in cold climates, we have to learn to adapt our behaviour to suit the environment, and if this means sticking to a slower pace, wearing a face mask or indeed doing something else when the conditions dictate, then so be it. One thing is for sure, we have to get along with the elements, because we certainly won't beat them!

Cross Country Canada (CCC), of which Lappe Nordic is a member club, provides the cold weather guidelines outlined in Rule 315.9 below for "Olympic Style Events". "Olympic Style Events" describe the type of events in which participants race hard and breathe deeply. These CCC guidelines are refinements from the international (FIS) rules, refinements which are more restrictive than the FIS rules. Lappe's "Cold Weather Club Race Event Cancellation Policy" is based upon Rule 315.9. Read the full policy for details about postponement and refunds.

Rule 315.9 from the Rules & Regulations states the following:

For Canadian competitions: With air temperatures below -20°C (temperature measured at the coldest point of the course and without wind factor) and competition distances less than or equal to 15 km, the Jury must postpone or cancel the competition. With competition distances greater than 15 km and temperature less than -18°C without wind factor, the Jury must postpone or cancel the competition. For Atom and Pee Wee age groups, with air temperatures below -15C (temperature measured at the coldest part of the course and without a wind factor), the Jury must postpone or cancel the competition. With any difficult weather conditions (e.g. strong winds, high air humidity, heavy snow, icy track conditions) at any air temperature, the Jury may, on consultation with the Team Leaders of the participating teams and the doctor responsible for the competition, postpone, cancel or shorten the competition.

CCC (in the FIS rules) also provides cold weather guidelines for "Loppet Style Events". The cold weather cut-off temperature for postponement or cancellation is stated as -25C and no distinction is made for

young participants. If you choose to participate at such cold temperatures, dress appropriately for warmth and protection of exposed skin and avoid breathing deeply by slowing down. Also consider dropping down to a shorter distance or not finishing an event if you start and find it's just too cold.

A doctor who is also an accomplished skier puts it this way, "In regards to the cold weather policy, I would say that if people are going to participate in an event below -20C they should approach it like a non-competitive tour, i.e. Warm ups, full face coverage, mitts, stops to assess for frostbite, hot packs for hands/feet, and submaximal efforts. I've seen too much carnage from loppets which follow the "-24 C is ok" rule."