

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

The blazing sun. The parched wastes. The heat of the desert. In Dark Sun, the environment can play a large part in gameplay. It doesn't have to – you can run a great Dark Sun game without ever setting foot outside one of the city-states – but if you plan to head out into the dunes, it's handy to have a set of rules to call on when needed.

Dark Sun 2e features several systems that can be used to deal with environmental hazards. In this blog, I'm sharing a few of those that see use the most often in the games I'm streaming at Lawful Stupid RPG. These are in three categories: **exposure**, **dehydration**, and the **Gray Death**. Most of these rules have appeared in various 2e products, spread over several supplements. This blog pulls them together, tweaks them a little, and polishes them off for use in your games. A pdf summarising the rules is, as always, attached at the end of the blog.

Exposure

The brutal Athasian sun is a major hazard. Merely being out in the heat of the day risks damage from heat stroke – and the freezing temperatures of the desert night can be similarly dangerous.

In game terms, this is expressed in Constitution damage. The two tables below give you a way to generate random temperatures in the Tablelands and the less-hospitable Valley of Dust and Fire (or simply choose a result you like from the table), and then summarise how much Constitution damage a character would suffer under that temperature.

An unprotected character takes Constitution damage from heat stroke/cold at the level and frequency for the day's temperature. A successful **heat protection** non-weapon proficiency check negates all damage from heat stroke/cold for that day. An argosy, building, or cave provide varying degrees of **shelter** from heat stroke (see below). Elves never take Constitution damage from heat stroke or cold – as creatures of the deep desert, they are accustomed to extremes of temperature.

Shade and Shelter

Characters can, of course, shield themselves from the rays of the dark sun. In addition to the heat protection non-weapon proficiency, other methods of acquiring shelter exist, as shown overleaf.

2d6 Roll	Tablelands, Sea of Silt				Valley of Dust and Fire			
	Day		Night		Day		Night	
	Descriptor	Degrees	Descriptor	Degrees	Descriptor	Degrees	Descriptor	Degrees
2	Cool	60-79	Cold	40-44	Warm	80-89	Cool	60-69
3	Warm	80-89	Cold	45-49	Warm	90-99	Cool	70-79
4	Warm	90-99	Cool	60-63	Hot	100-109	Warm	80-87
5	Hot	100-109	Cool	64-67	Hot	110-119	Warm	88-94
6	Hot	110-119	Cool	68-71	Very Hot	120-127	Warm	95-99
7	Very Hot	120-124	Cool	72-75	Very Hot	128-134	Hot	100-107
8	Very Hot	125-129	Cool	76-79	Very Hot	135-139	Hot	108-114
9	Very Hot	130-134	Warm	80-87	Furnace	140-149	Hot	115-119
10	Very Hot	135-139	Warm	88-94	Furnace	150-159	Very Hot	120-129
11	Furnace	140-149	Warm	95-99	Inferno	160-169	Very Hot	130-139
12	Furnace	150+	Hot	100+	Inferno	170+	Furnace	140+

Temperature				
Descriptor	Degrees	Water Requirements	Heat Stroke/Cold Damage	Damage Frequency
Cold	40-59	x½	1d4	Daily
Cool	60-79	x½	—	—
Warm	80-99	x1	—	—
Hot	100-119	x1	1d4	Daily
Very Hot	120-139	x1	1d6	Daily
Furnace	140-159	x2	1d8	Daily
Inferno	160+	x2	1d4	Hourly

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- A parasol, lean-to, overhang, cave, tent, building or argosy provides **shade**. While this does not reduce damage from heat stroke, shade does allow a character to rest properly. Characters who cannot find shade when resting during the day must make a saving throw vs. poison or fail to be fully rested (unable to recover spells or hit points). Shade also reduces the hazard of dehydration - see below.
- An argosy provides **partial shelter**, reducing the temperature by one category for the purposes of heat stroke.
- A building provides **improved shelter**, reducing the temperature by two categories for the purpose of heat stroke.
- A cave provides **total shelter**, negating heat stroke for that day.

Dehydration

Lack of water can kill. Characters need differing amounts of water, depending on their size, race, and level of activity.

- An **active** Medium character (one undertaking hard exertion, walking, riding, etc.) needs 1 gallon of water per day.
- An **active** Small character (such as a halfling) needs 1/2 gallon of water per day.
- An **active** Large character (such as a half-giant) needs four gallons of water per day.
- Thri-kreen need 1 gallon of water per week.
- An **inactive** character (sitting, resting, sleeping, etc.), needs 1/2 their normal water rations.
- A character in the **shade** (such as a parasol, lean-to, overhang, cave, tent, building or argosy) during the entire day needs 1/2 their normal water rations.
- A **character travelling at night** needs 1/2 their normal water rations.
- A character **wearing a full suit of metal armour** requires twice their normal water rations.

Dehydration Effects

A character who receives their full requirement of water suffers no Constitution damage from dehydration.

A character who receives half or more of their full requirement of water suffers 1d4 points of Constitution damage.

A character who receives less than half of their full requirement of water suffers 1d6 points of Constitution damage.

Constitution loss occurs at midnight on the day the character did not receive full water rations. A character drinking full water rations regains 1d8 Con at the end of that day. Lost hit points return at the normal rate.

The Gray Death

The Gray Death is suffocation from windborne dust while wading or flying above the Sea of Silt or its basins and estuaries (or even travelling near their borders) on windy days. The lungs and throat slowly clog with dust, and unprotected characters travelling in these conditions suffer as if they were drowning, except all times are computed in turns, not melee rounds. The Gray Death also imposes a +4 initiative penalty and -4 to hit and damage on all creatures enveloped by it.

Breathing through a thin, fine cloth (such as a filter mask) halves the initiative and attack roll penalties and avoids suffocation. The cloth must be kept damp and clean, which consumes 1/2 gallon of water per day (2 gallons for Large creatures).

Dust goggles will further reduce initiative and attack roll penalties by one point.

Taking refuge in a building or other protected area will also negate any penalties caused by the Gray Death.

The tables below provide a method for randomly generating wind conditions – roll on the table or choose a result. The tables list wind strength and the effects this has on the Gray Death. The tables also list the effect the wind has on silt-borne vehicles, if you use them in your game.

Wind Effects

- **Moderate** winds cause Gray Death conditions for silt waders or silt walkers only.
- **Strong** winds cause Gray Death conditions for anyone within one mile of the dust basin and flyers at less than 500' altitude. Aerial movement costs double.
- **Storm** winds cause Gray Death conditions for anyone within five miles of the dust basin and all flyers, regardless of altitude. Terrain costs triple; aerial movement costs quadruple.
- **Sirocco** winds cause Gray Death conditions for anyone within 20 miles of the dust basin. No flight or surface movement is possible. Siroccos lasts 1d4 days and nights (1 day in the Valley of Dust and Fire). Do not reroll weather until the storm blows itself out.
- **Ash Storm** conditions prevent all movement, and scouring, lightning, and Gray Death conditions exist for all exposed characters.

2d6	Wind Strength			
	Sea of Silt, Tablelands		Valley of Dust and Fire	
	Day	Night	Day	Night
2	None	None	Moderate	Light
3	Light	None	Moderate	Moderate
4	Light	Light	Strong	Moderate
5	Moderate	Light	Strong	Strong
6	Moderate	Light	Storm	Strong
7	Moderate	Moderate	Storm	Strong
8	Strong	Moderate	Storm	Storm
9	Strong	Moderate	Sirocco	Storm
10	Storm	Strong	Sirocco	Storm
11	Storm	Strong	Ash Storm	Sirocco
12	Sirocco	Storm	Ash Storm	Ash Storm

Winds	Average Speed	Wind Effects		
		Sailing speed modifier	Wheel speed modifier	Gray Death radius
Adverse	—	x½	x1	—
None	0 mph	N/A	x1	—
Light	10 mph	x1	x1	—
Moderate	20 mph	x2	x1	0
Strong	30 mph	x3	x1*	1
Storm	55 mph	x3*	x½*	5
Sirocco	70+ mph	x4**	x½**	20

* Check silt-worthiness.

** Check silt-worthiness at -9.

Also roll 1d6. On a 5 or 6, winds are adverse. When adverse winds are Storm strength or greater, any wind-powered vessel or vehicle will be blown off-course by half its movement rate.