

PROCEDURE FOR CANCELING ATHLETIC PRACTICES AND GAMES DUE TO EXTREME HEAT OR WEATHER

Purpose: To ensure the safety of athletes, coaches, and staff by canceling athletic practices and games when extreme heat or hazardous weather conditions pose a risk.

Scope: Applies to all athletic programs, including practices, games, and related activities, under the jurisdiction of the athletic department or Maggie L. Walker Governor's School.

Procedure

- **Monitor Weather Conditions**
 - **Responsibility:** Athletic Director (AD), Head Coach, or designated staff.
 - **Action:** Regularly check weather forecasts and real-time conditions using reliable sources (e.g., National Weather Service, local meteorological services, or weather apps).
 - **Criteria for Extreme Heat:**
 - Heat Index (feels-like temperature) exceeds 104°F (40°C) or local guidelines for unsafe heat levels.
 - Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT), if available, exceeds safe thresholds (e.g., 92°F/33°C for high-risk activities per NATA guidelines).
 - **Criteria for Hazardous Weather:**
 - Lightning within 10 miles (suspend activities for at least 30 minutes after the last strike).
 - Severe thunderstorm or tornado warnings.
 - Heavy rain causing unsafe field conditions (e.g., flooding, slippery surfaces).
 - Other extreme conditions (e.g., high winds, hail, or air quality alerts).
- **Assess Risk**
 - **Responsibility:** AD, Head Coach, or designated safety officer.
 - **Action:**
 - Evaluate the severity and duration of the weather condition.
 - Consult local or state athletic association guidelines (e.g., NFHS, NCAA, VHSL) for heat and weather policies.
 - Consider the age, fitness level, and acclimatization of athletes, as well as the type of activity (e.g., outdoor vs. indoor, high-intensity vs. low-intensity).
 - If conditions are borderline, err on the side of caution and prioritize athlete safety.
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- **Decision to Cancel**
 - **Responsibility:** AD or designated decision-maker (in consultation with coaches or officials for games).
 - **Action:**

- Make the decision to cancel as early as possible to allow sufficient time for communication.
- For practices, the AD or Head Coach may decide.
- For games, coordinate with opposing teams, officials, and league administrators.
- Document the reason for cancellation (e.g., heat index, lightning, field conditions) for records and liability purposes.
- Communicate Cancellation
 - Responsibility: AD, Coach, or designated staff.
 - Action:
 - Notify all affected parties immediately, including:
 - Athletes, parents/guardians, and coaching staff.
 - Opposing teams, officials, and league administrators (for games).
 - Facility managers, transportation providers, and other relevant personnel.
 - Use multiple communication channels to ensure reach:
 - Email, text messages, or group messaging apps (e.g., TeamSnap, WhatsApp).
 - Athletic department website, social media, or automated phone systems.
 - Post notices at facilities if applicable.
 - Include details such as:
 - Reason for cancellation.
 - Rescheduling information (if known).
 - Instructions for athletes (e.g., stay hydrated, avoid outdoor activity).
- Secure Facilities and Equipment
 - Responsibility: AD, Athletic Trainer.
 - Action:
 - Ensure fields, courts, or equipment are secured to prevent damage from weather (e.g., cover equipment, lock facilities).
 - Clear the area of athletes and staff to avoid exposure to hazardous conditions.
- Reschedule or Adjust Plans
 - Responsibility: AD or Head Coach.
 - Action:
 - For practices: Determine if an indoor alternative (e.g., film review, light conditioning) is feasible and safe.
 - For games: Coordinate with opponents and officials to reschedule, if possible, per league policies.
 - Update all parties on rescheduling details as soon as they are confirmed.
- Post-Cancellation Review
 - Responsibility: AD or designated staff.

- Action:
 - Review the decision-making process and communication effectiveness.
 - Document any issues (e.g., delayed notifications, unclear guidelines) and adjust protocols as needed.
 - Ensure compliance with local, state, or national safety regulations.

Additional Guidelines

- Heat-Specific Protocols:
 - Follow heat acclimatization guidelines (e.g., gradual exposure to heat over 7-14 days for athletes).
 - Provide hydration breaks and cooling stations during practices in borderline conditions.
 - Educate coaches and athletes on heat illness symptoms (e.g., heat exhaustion, heat stroke).
- Weather-Specific Protocols:
 - Use the “30-30 Rule” for lightning: If thunder follows lightning within 30 seconds, suspend activities for 30 minutes.
 - Monitor air quality index (AQI) for outdoor activities during poor air quality events.
- Emergency Preparedness:
 - Ensure access to emergency medical services and first aid for heat- or weather-related incidents.
 - Train staff on recognizing and responding to weather-related emergencies.

References

- National Athletic Trainers’ Association (NATA) Heat Guidelines.
- National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Weather Safety Policies.
- Local or state athletic association regulations.

This procedure ensures a structured, safety-first approach to canceling athletic activities due to extreme heat or weather, with clear steps for decision-making and communication.

Adopted: September 18, 2025
