



RECESS/LUNCH/OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

Responsibility: *Coordinating Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being*

Legal References:

Related References:

Revisions: *April 2017, December 2021*

Reviewed: *January 2016*

1. Preamble

- 1.1 The following procedure provides guidelines and expectations pertaining to the administration of recess and lunch hours during severe weather conditions, including extreme sun, cold and smog.

2. General

- 2.1 It is an expectation of the Waterloo Region District School Board that principals be sensitive to the safety and well-being of students during periods of severe weather conditions. Two considerations must be balanced to best meet the needs of students:
 - 2.1.1 There is a need to ensure the safety and well-being of students. During severe weather conditions, the safety of students must be the primary concern of principals. Principals will make the decision to keep students inside when the conditions warrant such action.
 - 2.1.2 Recess provides a necessary break for students where physical activity and socialization refresh students and help them to be more successful in the learning activities that follow a recess break. Principals will allow outdoor recess whenever possible.
- 2.2 The decision to keep students in during recess/lunch hour is to be made by the principal or designate of each school. The Board is confident that principals will use sound judgment when making these decisions.

3. Extreme Sun

- 3.1 Sunburn, skin cancer and other sun-related adverse health effects are largely preventable when sun protection is practiced in a timely and consistent manner. The best sun protection is provided when all sun-safe behaviours are practiced together.
- 3.2 Sun Protection habits will be promoted:
 - 3.2.1 Limit the sun exposure during the hours of 11:00am to 4:00pm. To the extent possible, people should limit their exposure to the sun during these hours and practice all sun protective behaviours. A person's shadow is an indicator of the sun's intensity. The American Academy of Dermatology has established the Shadow Rule: Short Shadow – SEEK SHADE.

- 3.2.2 Refer to the daily UV Index when planning outdoor events. The UV Index is a daily forecast of the intensity of the sun's UV rays. The Index indicates the risk of overexposure and to skin-damaging UV radiation and can be used to help outdoor activities to minimize overexposure. The UV Index can be accessed through the following link: <https://ec.gc.ca/uv/>
 - 3.2.3 Seek shade whenever possible. Shade structures such as trees and umbrellas provide year round protection. Although trees do not offer complete sun protection, they provide about 60 percent blockage from the sun's rays.
 - 3.2.4 Wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and long-sleeved, tightly woven clothing. Clothing can physically block out the sun's harmful rays and should be one of the first lines of defense against sun exposure. Sunglasses should block out 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation to protect the eyes from damage. Hats are the best way to minimize UV radiation exposure to the face, head, ears, and neck.
 - 3.2.5 Use broad-spectrum sunscreens whose active ingredients block UVA and UVB rays. The Sun Protective Factor (SPF) should be a minimum of 15. Sunscreens should be used every day, including cloudy days. They should be applied liberally and evenly before going out into the sun and should be applied frequently, especially after swimming.
 - 3.2.6 Limit exposure to the reflective surfaces like snow and water. UV rays can be reflected off of sand, tile, water, snow, and buildings. It is important to practice all the sun protective behaviors even when you are in the shade.
 - 3.2.7 Sun Safety resources can be accessed at the following Waterloo Region Public Health website.
<http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/healthylivinghealthprotection/sun-protection.aspx>
- 3.3 Consequently, principals will need to:
- 3.3.1 Cancel any organized events, outdoor activities, field trips or outdoor sports events that would risk extended exposure to the UV rays;
 - 3.3.2 Remind teachers that any activities they have scheduled outside may need to be revised or rescheduled;
 - 3.3.3 Remind students who will be outside to engage in Sun Protection Habits.

4. Extreme Cold

- 4.1 The decision regarding recess will be made using the following data:
 - 4.1.1 The specifics of the local situation. Some Schools have protected areas where weather conditions are mitigated; others are very exposed.
 - 4.1.2 Local weather reports. Both temperature and wind conditions must be considered. In general, when the "wind chill" factor is approximately between -20° C and -27° C, the principal should consider moving to a shortened outdoor break, ensuring that local mitigating circumstances make it safe to send students outside even for short periods of time. When temperature falls below -27° C breaks will occur indoors only.
 - 4.1.3 The following are some excellent sources:
 - University of Waterloo weather website: <http://weather.uwaterloo.ca/>
 - Environment Canada weather website: https://weather.gc.ca/canada_e.html
- 4.2 Principals should discuss the plans of neighbouring schools as part of their decision-making process.
- 4.3 Input from other staff members should be considered.
- 4.4 The principal is responsible for using this data to make the best decision.

5. Smog Advisory

- 5.1 The Ministry of the Environment issues Smog Advisories when the expected Smog level will reach or exceed 50. These alerts will be posted in the elementary and secondary administrators' conferences on WaterWorks as they are received.
- 5.2 When a Smog Advisory is issued, all outside play and sports activities will be cancelled for students in Kindergarten to Grade 6. This applies beginning at lunchtime for the balance of the school day.
- 5.3 The Board motion that mandates this policy refers to "play and sports activities". Smog Advisories suggest that "strenuous outdoor activities should be reduced".
- 5.4 Consequently, principals will need to:
 - 5.4.1 cancel any organized events that would include strenuous outdoor activity;
 - 5.4.2 remind teachers that any activities they have scheduled outside may need to be revised;
 - 5.4.3 remind students who will be outside to "go slow".
- 5.5 Additional information about Air Quality Forecasts is available on the Ontario Ministry of the Environment website at <http://airqualityontario.com/aqhi/index.php>