

## **WEATHER POLICIES**

### **HEAT AND HYDRATION POLICY**

Practice or competition in hot and humid environmental conditions poses special problems for athletes. Heat stress and resulting heat illness is a primary concern in these conditions. Although deaths from heat illness are rare, constant surveillance and education are necessary to prevent heat-related problems.

### **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RISK REDUCTION**

Encourage proper education regarding heat illnesses (for athletes, coaches, parents, medical staff, etc...). Education about risk factors should focus on hydration needs, acclimatization, work/rest ratio, signs and symptoms of heat illness due to over-exertion, treatment, dietary supplements, nutritional issues, and fitness status.

Assure that trained staff members have the authority to alter work/rest ratios, practice schedules, amount of equipment, and withdrawal of individuals from participation based on environment and/or athlete's medical condition.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

- An initial complete medical history and physical exam is required.
- Gradual acclimatization of the athlete to hot/humid conditions is essential. Athletes should gradually increase exposure to hot and/or humid environmental conditions over a period of seven to 10 days to best achieve acclimatization.
- Athletes should be encouraged to drink plenty of fluids prior to and after workouts/games. This will help reduce the chance of heat-related illness. In addition, athletes should be encouraged to eat well-balanced meals.
- Clothing and protective gear can increase heat stress. Dark colors absorb solar radiation, clothing and protective gear interfere with the evaporation of sweat and other avenues of heat loss. During the acclimatization process, athletes should practice in t-shirts, shorts, socks and shoes. Rubberized suits should never be worn.
- Junior high coordinators will get a heat index reading from an approved local source and follow the guidelines appropriate for that heat index reading.

## **SPECIFIC GUIDELINES**

- Heat index of less than 100 degrees
- No Restrictions
  
- Heat index of 100-105 degrees
- Football attire should be shorts, shoulder pads, and helmets.
- High school outdoor workouts should be shortened to 2 hours with 10 minute breaks every 45 minutes at the minimum.
- Junior high workouts should be limited to 1 1/2 hours with 10 minute breaks every 30 minutes at the minimum.
- Football conditioning should take place without helmets or shoulder pads.
- Athletes should be allowed to remove helmets if not actively participating.
- “Extra or makeup” work should take place indoors.
- Cross country should stay on campus.
  
- Heat index of 106-110 degrees
- Football attire should be shorts, shoulder pads, and helmets.
- Refer to guidelines above for Heat Index of 100-105 degrees.
- Outdoor workouts should be shortened to 1 1/2 hours for high school and 1 hour for junior high.
- No outdoor conditioning at the end of practice.
  
- Heat Index of greater than 110 degrees
- No outdoor workout.

## **COLD POLICY**

Any athletic activity scheduled to take place at an outside setting in which a program from the HEB ISD is competing may be rescheduled if the temperature is 32 degrees or below. Every effort shall be made for this decision to be made by 1:00 pm on the day of the game. This decision must be approved by the athletic office.

## **LIGHTNING POLICY**

While the probability of being struck by lightning is extremely low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and proper safety precautions are not followed. Prevention and education are the keys to lightning safety. This policy includes guidelines from the NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook.

The athletic training department, athletic coordinator, and/or administration will monitor the weather forecasts and radar the day of the game and during the event. All information received about threatening weather will be distributed through the chain of command.

Be aware of any “Watches” or “Warnings” that have been issued for the area by the National Weather Service.

- A “Watch” means conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in the area.
- A “Warning” means that severe weather has been reported in the area and everyone should take precautions.

## **Chain of Command**

During outside activities, such as football and soccer games, the licensed athletic trainer and/or district event administrator shall be responsible for activating the Lightning Safety Policy by suspending the game.

- The licensed athletic trainer and/or the district event administrator will communicate and make the decision to suspend the game.
- The athletic trainer and/or district event administrator will communicate with the game officials, head coaches, administrators, and teams on the field.
- The district event administrator will inform the stadium manager and the public address announcer, so the necessary evacuation of the stands can begin.
- Teams and spectators will be instructed to move to safe locations.

## **Defining Safe Locations**

A top priority of lightning safety is removing athletes from the field of play and into a safe location.

### **Primary Location**

Any building that is frequently occupied by people. Plumbing and electrical wiring helps to ground the structure.

### **Secondary Locations**

If no primary location is available, any vehicle with a **HARD METAL ROOF** and rolled up windows can provide safety. **DO NOT TOUCH** the sides of the vehicle. Golf carts and convertibles provide **NO SAFETY** in a lightning storm. With a vehicle, the **HARD METAL ROOF** dissipates the lightning, not the rubber tires.

- Unsafe Shelters
- Open fields and high places
- Isolated trees
- Gazebos
- Rain or picnic shelters
- Baseball/softball dugouts
- The ramp of a stadium
- Bleachers (metal or wood)
- Metal fences
- Water

### **“FLASH TO BANG”**

Suspension and Resumption of Athletic Activities

- Flash to Bang will be the primary method used to determine how far the thunderstorm is from the activity.
- When suspicious cloud/storm approaches, the athletic trainer, head coach, assistant coach, and/or administrator shall monitor the approaching storm using the Flash to Bang method. Simply count the number of seconds between the lightning “flash” and the thunder “bang.” Divide the number of seconds by 5 to determine the distance the strike is from your activity.
- **EXAMPLE:** If 15 seconds are counted between the flash and bang, divide 15 by 5. The lightning is 3 miles away.

Play must be suspended as flash to bang reaches 50 seconds or the 10 mile range.

## **“30-30 RULE”**

Criteria for suspension of activities:

By the time the flash to bang count is approaching 30 seconds; all participants should already be inside a safe shelter.

Criteria for resumption of activities:

Wait at least 30 minutes after each subsequent flash of lightning or bang of thunder before leaving the safe shelter to resume activities.

Once a game or practice has been suspended, the storm should continue to be monitored. No contest or practice should be resumed until no lightning has been detected within a 10 mile range for 30 consecutive minutes using the Flash to Bang method.

Each time a new lightning is strike detected or a clap of thunder is heard, the 30 minute clock restarts.

For sub-varsity games, play must resume within 45 minutes of the initial point of suspension, or the game shall be canceled.

Although the home team is responsible for each game or match, it should be noted that the athletic trainer, head coach, and/or administrator is responsible for the safety and well being of adults and students in his/her charge. If no policy is in effect at the away site, it is recommended that the HEB ISD Policy be followed.