

<b>Inclement Weather Safety</b>	
<b>Adopted:</b> November 28, 2005	<b>Last Reviewed/Revised:</b> November 4, 2024
<b>Next Scheduled Review:</b> 2027-2028	
<b>Associated Policies &amp; Procedures:</b> <a href="#">VI-47 Inclement Weather - Transportation Cancellations and Emergency School Closures</a> <a href="#">II-07 The School Day (Daily Sessions) - Elementary and Secondary</a> <a href="#">II-26 Managing Student Risk in Interschool Sports</a> <a href="#">II-33 Safe Arrival at School Program</a>	

## Purpose

To provide personnel in the Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB) with information and guidelines regarding the safety of students and staff during various inclement weather situations and to ensure consistency among schools when school personnel are making decisions regarding student and staff safety during various inclement weather situations.

## Application and Scope

This procedure applies to all schools and related events during various inclement weather situations that occur during the school day.

## References

[Education Act](#)

[Halton Region Public Health](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

[OPHEA Lightning Protocol](#)

[OPHEA Sample Air Quality Health Index Preparedness Guide](#)

[OPHEA Sample Temperature \(Hot/Cold\) Preparedness Guide](#)

[OPHEA Sample Tornado Preparedness Guide](#)

[OPHEA Sample UV Index Preparedness Guide](#)

[OPHEA Sample Wind Velocity Preparedness Guide](#)

## Principles

- HCDSB is committed to taking every responsible precaution for the protection of all of its employees and students.
- The *Education Act*, S265, states that it is the duty of the Principal of a school to “give assiduous attention to the health and comfort of all pupils under their care”.
- The *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, S25(2) (h) states that employers have a duty to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker.
- For the purposes of this procedure, the following organizations have served as a resource and reference for various inclement weather situations regarding the safety of students and staff:
  - Environment Canada
  - Halton Regional Health Unit
  - The Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy
  - Halton Partners for Clean Air
  - Halton Conservation Authority
  - Health and Safety Ontario (HSO)
  - OPHEA

The range and types of inclement weather situations listed under the Requirements section of this procedure do not supersede the duty and power of the Principal or designate of each school to make local decisions about the safety of students and staff regarding various inclement weather conditions.

It is recommended that where Principals or designates choose to make local decisions regarding the safety of students and staff during inclement weather conditions, that they err on the side of caution regarding each situation.

For the purpose of this procedure, the following websites will be considered the primary sources of official information for all temperature related facts, i.e., heat, cold, humidex, wind-chill, etc. when determining the need to make a decision regarding the safety of students and staff during a specific inclement weather situation: <https://weather.gc.ca/> or [www.weathernetwork.ca](http://www.weathernetwork.ca).

## Requirements

### **1. EXTREME COLD: TEMPERATURE WITH OR WITHOUT WINDCHILL (Cold Weather Action Plan)**

- a) warmer than -15°C: students may remain outside for all regular outside activities
- b) between -15° and -20°C: students may remain outside for no longer than 20 minute

- intervals at a time
- c) colder than -20°C: students must remain inside
  - d) when the temperature or wind-chill reaches -20C (twenty degrees below zero, Celsius), students will be granted immediate entry to school upon arrival, and students will remain indoors during nutrition breaks. When temperatures thresholds are in effect, students are required to keep their outdoor coats/jackets with them throughout the instructional day, in case of a need to evacuate the school.

*\*\*Warnings and advisories issued by Halton Health Department at -20°C.*

## **2. EXTREME HEAT: TEMPERATURE WITH OR WITHOUT HUMIDEX (Hot Weather Action Plan)**

- a) cooler than 35°C: students may remain outside for all regular outside activities
- b) between 35° and 40°C: students may remain outside for no longer than 20 minute intervals at a time
- c) hotter than 40°C: students must remain inside

*\*\*Warnings and advisories issued by Halton Health Department at +35°.*

## **3. HEAT STRESS:**

Definition of Heat Stress: Working or playing where it is hot puts stress on your body's cooling system. When heat is combined with other stresses such as hard physical work, loss of fluids, fatigue or some medical conditions as well as humidity, it may lead to heat-related illness, disability and even death.

Environment Canada will issue "Humidex Advisories" when the maximum daily humidex is expected to be 40° or higher. If a humidex advisory is issued for our region, then the Halton Region Public Health will issue a "Heat Alert"

When warnings have been issued by Environment Canada, the principal or designate must take the necessary precautions to protect staff and students including precautions to prevent heat-stress related illnesses.

Refer to HSO – Health and Safety Guidelines – Heat Stress for further information [Managing heat stress at work](#).

## **4. UV INDEX AND SUN PROTECTION:**

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take precautions with their children, i.e. protective clothing, eyewear, sunscreen, etc. when the UV Index is greater than 8

Limit the amount of time in the sun

UV INDEX Exposure Category:

• Low = 0-2 • Moderate = 3-5 • High = 6-7 • Very High = 8-10 • Extreme = 11+

## **5. AIR QUALITY HEALTH INDEX:**

For an Air Quality Health Index higher than 7, strenuous outdoor activities should be reduced or rescheduled for students considered “At Risk”. Consider reducing strenuous outdoor activities for the general population of students. For an Air Quality Health Index above 10, avoid strenuous outdoor activities for students considered “At Risk”. Strenuous activities should be reduced or rescheduled for the general population of students. Consideration should be made for students and staff with asthma, diabetes, heart and lung disease, etc.

## **6. THUNDERSTORM WATCH/WARNING/LIGHTNING STRIKES:**

When warnings are issued by Environment Canada, the principal or designate must take the necessary precautions to protect staff and students.

When lightning is seen, thunder is heard, immediately suspend the activity/practice/game and direct student athletes and spectators (where applicable) to a safe shelter (any building normally occupied or frequently used by people. Sheds, tents, open shelters on athletic fields and parks are designed to protect from rain and sun but NOT lightning. Any vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled up windows can provide a measure of safety.). Avoid: open fields, the highest point in an open area, tall objects e.g. trees, poles, metal objects e.g. football standards, light poles, metal bleachers, fences, objects that conduct electricity e.g. golf clubs, bicycles. Take shelter in a low-lying area such as ditches, depressions, valleys (be aware of flooding). In a forest, seek shelter in a low-lying area under a thick growth of small trees or bushes. Remove metal objects (that is, anything conductive) and jewellery from body and pockets. Minimize body surface area in contact with the ground. (Do NOT lie flat on the ground.) Assume safest body position: crouch down, place feet close together, with only the balls of feet touching the ground, lower head and wrap arms around knees. In a group in an open area, spread out to be several meters from others.

This may also mean the cancellation of recess periods and/or delays in dismissals. The variable nature of these local weather conditions requires principals to use their discretion in protecting students and assigning supervisory staff when needed.

Wait a minimum of 30 minutes from the last visual observation of lightning or sound of thunder before going back outside or resuming activity. Even if the sun is shining and the sky is blue.

At all times the Board’s lightning procedures (above) are the mandatory minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (e.g. trip guides, facility/program coordinators) the higher standard of care is to be followed.

The persons filling the roles of teacher/coach/staff supervisor in charge at specific events or on field trips are responsible for making the decision to stopping the activity, directing the participants to safe shelter and determining when/if it is safe to resume the activity.

## **7. HIGH WATER WARNING/FLOOD ADVISORY:**

When issued by the Halton Conservation Authority, inform the students and staff via the public address system the period of time the advisory is issued for.

## **8. WIND VELOCITY**

**Wind Warning:** Parameters Environment Canada uses for issuing a wind warning.

Threshold criteria: 70 km/h or more sustained wind and/or gusts to 90 km/hr or more. A wind warning can be issued but no wind watch alert will be issued by Environment Canada. Wind speed is included in forecast when speed is greater or equal to 20 km/h.

### **Wind Speed / Precautions to be Taken**

**40 - 49 km/h** - teacher/staff supervisor to take into consideration activity surroundings e.g. trees, unsecure objects ground cover (sand), and equipment being used. Secure appropriate items. **Activity is to stop and/or moved indoors when effect of wind poses a risk to participants.**

**50 - 59 km/h – avoid outside activities**

### **WIND WARNING**

**60 km/h or gusts of 90 km/h – no outdoor activities**

## **9. TORNADO WARNING:**

Refer to the individual school's Emergency Response Plan. (Site based safety plan put in place at the discretion of the principal.)

### **Actions to be Taken at School:**

Know the Tornado Safe Areas and communicate to students:

MAIN SCHOOL BUILDING – INSIDE HALLWAYS – AT LOWEST LEVEL OF THE BUILDING. Avoid areas that are not protected by overhead floors and rooms that may have a wide span roof without supports in the middle, making it more likely to collapse if struck by a tornado. For example: Gymnasiums, arenas, auditoriums, libraries, portables, outside walls, windows, glass doorways, and outside areas (for example, during physical activities, recess).

## **10. PRECIPITATION (rain, snow, freezing rain, etc.)**

At the discretion of each Principal and related to local safety issues.

## **11. Specific information for each section under Requirements is available from School Services Department.**

APPROVED: Regular Meeting of the Administrative Council

AUTHORIZED BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Education and Secretary of the Board