



<b>POLICY TITLE: Inclement Weather</b>		
<b>Policy Number: 08.002</b>	<b>Review Cycle: Annual</b>	<b>Effective Date: 1/23/24</b>
<b>Reviewer: Chief of Recreation Services and Chief of Nature, Environment, Agriculture and Programs</b>		<b>Approval Authority: Deputy Director</b>

**SCOPE:**

This applies to all staff members at Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks (BCRP) and members of the public.

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for staff at Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks to ensure the safe operation of facilities and programs. This policy will govern:

1. Inclement Weather
  - a. Winter Weather
  - b. Thunderstorms & Lightning
  - c. Tornadoes
  - d. High Winds
  - e. Air Quality Advisory
  - f. Excessive Heat
  - g. Heat Safety at Outdoor Artificial Turf Locations

**INCLEMENT WEATHER:**

Inclement weather is a general term used to describe weather conditions that are either unsafe or undesirable for outdoor programs and events. This term includes rain, snow, thunderstorms, lightning, tornadoes, high winds, air quality, and excessive heat. Inclement weather may cause program cancellations, facility closures, or necessitate other modifications to Recreation and Parks operations.

Programs may also be canceled or modified due to road conditions, power outages, flooding, local conditions, etc. The public should check the Baltimore County Severe Weather and Closing Information web page at <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/News/weather/>, call the Program Status Line at **410-**

**88-PARKS**, view the BCRP Facebook page, or contact their local recreation office to find out whether a program or facility is operating.

### **Winter Weather:**

Baltimore County Recreation and Parks will follow the operating status of Baltimore County General Government but maintains the right to make additional weather-related closures and operational adjustments. When Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) are closed by snow, all Recreation and Parks programs and organized activities (permits) will be cancelled at School Sites. Delayed BCPS openings will cancel before care programs and early BCPS closures will cancel after care programs at BCPS facilities. Weather related cancellations for all non-school sites will be made at the discretion of the Department. School Recreation Centers (SRCs) may resume when the snow emergency plan has been lifted and local staff has received approval to reopen a specific site. Offices, recreation centers, and public visitor centers remain open unless Baltimore County Government is also closed. Parks remain open from sunrise to sunset.

### **Thunderstorms and Lightning:**

“When Thunder Roars, Get Indoors.” BCRP Staff and Volunteers will suspend or postpone activities if a thunderstorm appears imminent before or during outdoor activities. If thunder can be heard, lightning is close enough to be a hazard and everyone should head to a safe location immediately. Allowing sufficient time for individuals to safely evacuate the premises must be taken into consideration by staff and volunteers. All activities will be suspended until 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder is heard. This 30-minute clock restarts each time thunder is heard. Spectator and participants will be directed to the nearest safe location which in many instances will be their vehicles. Participants and spectators should only make their way back to a venue after an “all-clear” from BCRP Staff. Consideration must be given to patrons leaving safe locations and returning to the venue.

### **Tornadoes:**

If a Tornado Warning is issued by the National Weather Service, for the Baltimore County area (or in the absence of a warning – a severe weather alert is received), all activity (program, practice and/or competition) will be stopped immediately and/or cancelled. All participants, game officials, staff and spectators will be informed or relocated according to the procedures outlined for each venue or to the nearest safest location. Once the warning is lifted and no other weather hazards exist in the vicinity, the activity can resume provided the playing area is safe for all players, spectators, and staff.

### **High Wind Warnings:**

When a high wind warning or gale warning is issued by the National Weather Service all watersports programs will be cancelled or postponed until the warning is suspended or conditions improve. Watersports programs include canoeing, kayaking, and boat and equipment rentals.

### **Air Quality Advisory:**

The Air Quality Index is a measure of air pollution (particulates, ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide) on a scale of 0 to 500. Values below 50 represent good air quality and values over 300 represent hazardous air quality. When the AQI reaches purple (201-300) the Department of Recreation and Parks will advise all programs and activities to move indoors and limit outdoor activities and work. When the AQI reaches maroon (301 and higher) the Department of Recreation and Parks will

direct staff to work indoors, cancel outdoor programs and activities, and advise the public to refrain from passive outdoor recreation and activities.

### **Excessive Heat:**

During the spring/summer/fall seasons, BCRP encourages participants to follow the guidelines below:

Game or Practice Time heat index of 88-95 degrees – Guardians, Coaches, and Volunteers are encouraged to take extra steps to protect their players by making sure they keep them hydrated and by encouraging frequent substitution during games and practices. Guardians should make sure that players are hydrated prior to participating and that they are wearing sunscreen.

Game or Practice Time heat index of 96-99 degrees - Guardians, Coaches, and Volunteers are encouraged to take extra steps to protect their players by making sure they keep them hydrated and by encouraging frequent substitution during games and practices. Parents should make sure that players are hydrated prior to participating and that they are wearing sunscreen. Sport activities that require players to wear helmets or bulky protective equipment should be modified.

Game or Practice Time heat index of 100-103 degrees – Follow all procedures noted above and activities should be reduced by 25-40%. If it is a practice day, coaches are instructed to reduce the time of practice, take frequent breaks and keep players well hydrated by having them drink water. For example, during a 1-hour practice, the coach should take at least 3 – 5-minute breaks, including shade and cold water.

Game or Practice Time heat index of above 103 – BCRP Staff, Officials, coaches and parents will cancel the activity.

The above are merely guidelines and it is the responsibility of guardians to make the ultimate decision as to the participation of their child in BCRP programs and events when heat may be a factor. Guardians need to consider the age and physical condition of their child. Guardians also have the ultimate responsibility to inform their child about the dangers of heat and need for protection, including sunscreen and proper hydration before, during and after an event. Guardians, Coaches, and Volunteers should familiarize themselves with the signs of heat related illnesses.

Because BCRP utilizes many sites in the area and weekday and weekend games occur throughout the day, we encourage guardians, coaches, and volunteers to monitor the current conditions. The current heat index is available at: [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) See the “feels like” temperature.

### **Heat Safety at Outdoor Artificial Turf Locations:**

BCRP staff will follow the NRPA and TURI recommendations as follows:

Activities on artificial turf fields be restricted when the heat index is between 91 - 104 degrees Fahrenheit between the hours of noon and 5 p.m. Three water breaks per hour are required under these conditions.

When the heat index is above 104 degrees Fahrenheit or the surface temperature exceeds 120 degrees Fahrenheit, all activities on artificial turf fields should be canceled.

### **REFERENCES:**

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- [National Recreation and Parks Association Synthetic Field Heat Standards](#)

- [Turfgrass Research Institute Standards](#)

**REVISIONS:**

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