

**Cherokee Recreation & Parks
Severe Weather Guidelines for Youth Athletics**



The following guidelines for heat related illness, extreme cold temperatures, and lightning safety are suggested, though each participant and situation is unique, and may not require every step listed or may call for different or additional measures.

Warning Sirens

When the emergency warning siren sounds the YAA should take immediate action. Each YAA shall identify a safe area for their particular sport complex and notify coaches or managers of these areas at the coaches/managers meetings. The Cherokee County Office of Homeland Security – Emergency Management will sound these sirens when:

- The National Weather Service issues a significant weather alert. There is no tone with this alert. It is voice activation only.
- The National Weather Service issues a severe thunderstorm warning with damaging winds.
- The National Weather Service issues a tornado warning.
- A funnel cloud has been spotted by public safety officials or reported by the public or if the local weather channels indicate presence of a funnel cloud.
- Additional weather warnings are issued.

Immediate Actions should include:

- When siren sounds immediately leave the playing field and seek shelter.
- If during a storm and you are outside in open areas away from a shelter or shelters are not available lie flat on the ground away from trees until the storm passes.
- Tune to local radio station for weather updates. Each YAA should monitor a weather radio which should be located in each concession stand.
- Do not call 911 to ask why the sirens are sounding as this can overload the 911 emergency response system. Only call 911 in an emergency.

Due to an alarming rise in weather related casualties in recreation sport settings in recent decades, the National Athletic Trainers' Association has released the following guidelines to follow when participating in outside athletic or recreation activities.

- Establish a chain of command that identifies who is to make the call to remove individuals from the field.
- Name a designated weather watcher. (A person who actively looks for the signs of threatening weather and notifies the chain of command if severe weather becomes dangerous.)
- Have a means of monitoring local weather forecasts. Know weather definitions:
 - Watch indicates conditions are favorable for severe weather.
 - Warning means severe weather has been detected in the area and all persons should take the necessary precautions.
- The official sound to warn officials, league directors, coaches, managers, players and spectators of the need to clear the fields in a timely manner will be three consecutive five (5) second blasts from the hand held distress device. Coaches and managers should be informed what the official warning sound will be at the coaches / managers meetings.
- If the press box is occupied, an announcement will be made that acknowledges the need to clear the fields and that all play is suspended. No one will be allowed to resume play or be allowed on the fields until the officials or league director makes the determination that it is safe for play to resume.

- Designate a safe shelter for each venue and notify coaches/managers of these areas at the coaches/managers meetings. Unsafe places are near metal or aluminum, under trees, on hills and near electrical/electronic equipment.
- **Severe Weather Watch:** Once a severe weather watch is announced, the YAA will prepare to stop play and secure the facilities. The YAA will monitor the weather conditions to determine playability and safety of the facilities and its users.
- **Severe Weather Warning:** ALL PLAY WILL STOP! All players, spectators, coaches and league officials must leave the facility in an orderly manner. The facility will be closed until there is notification that weather conditions have cleared enabling safe use.
- **Lightning Recommendations:** Use the Flash-to-Bang (lightning to thunder) count to determine when to go to safety. By the time the flash-to-bang count approaches thirty seconds all individuals must be off the playing field/playing surface. YAA's may use advanced technology (hand held detection devices, smart phones, etc.) to determine distance. It shall be \leq six (6) miles.
- Once activities have been suspended, wait at least thirty minutes following the last sound of thunder or lightning flash prior to resuming an activity or returning outdoors.
- Avoid being on the highest point in an open field, in contact with or proximity to the highest point, as well as being on open water. Do not take shelter under or near trees, flagpoles, or light poles.
- Assume the lightning safe position (i.e. crouched on the ground, weight on the balls of the feet, feet together, head lowered, and ears covered) for individuals who feel their hair stand on end, skin tingle, or hear "crackling" noises. Do not lie flat on the ground.
- Observe the following basic first aid procedures in managing victims of a lightning strike:
 - Survey the scene for safety.
 - Activate local EMS by calling 911.
 - Lightning victims do not 'carry a charge' and are safe to touch.
 - If necessary, move the victim with care to a safer location.
 - Evaluate airway, breathing, and circulation, and begin CPR if necessary.
 - Evaluate and treat for hypothermia, shock, fractures, and/or burns.
- All individuals have the right to leave an athletic site in order to seek a safe structure if the person feels in danger of impending lightning activity without fear of repercussions or penalty from anyone.

Hot Weather Recommendations

The Heat Index (HI) is the temperature the body feels when heat and humidity are combined. The heat index provides general guidelines for assessing the potential severity of heat stress. Individual reactions to heat will vary. It should be remembered that heat illness can occur at lower temperatures. Studies indicate that susceptibility to heat illness tends to increase with age. The following are recommended guidelines for coaches and board members to follow. In responding to each situation that arises, coaches and board members should use their best judgment.

Heat Index Matrix

Heat Index	Effects On Body	Practice Hours	Breaks	Fluids
Caution 80 – 89 F	Some dehydration may occur.	Use Caution. Monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.	Remove Helmets. 5 minute breaks every 20 minutes. Ice down towels for cooling.	Cold Water
Extreme Caution 90 – 104 F	Cramps or heat exhaustion possible.	Use Extreme Caution. Helmets and other possible equipment removed if not involved in contact or necessary for safety. Monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.	Remove Helmets. 5 minute breaks every 15 minutes. Ice down towels for cooling.	Cold Water
Danger 105 – 129 F	Cramps or heat exhaustion likely, heat stroke possible.	Helmets, t- shirts and shorts. No shoulder pads. Alter uniforms by removing items where feasible. Practice time should be shortened with low intensity and limited conditioning. Monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.	Remove Helmets. 5 minute breaks every 10 minutes. Ice down towels for cooling.	Cold Water
Extreme Danger 130 F and Above	Heat stroke highly likely.	NO PRACTICE	NO PRACTICE	Cold Water

1. Approximately thirty (30) minutes prior to the start of activity, temperature and heat index reading should be taken at the practice or competition website from www.weather.com or a comparable source.
2. These guidelines are to be applied to all practices that take place on or off park property.
3. Practices and games should be held early in the morning and/or later in the evening to avoid times when conditions are generally more severe.
4. An unlimited supply of water shall be available to participants during practices.
 - a. Coaches should be made aware of the water source location at each YAA sport facility prior to practices or games.
 - b. Coaches/Board Members shall inform all participants that water is always available or accessible and they will be given permission anytime he/she asks for water.
 - c. Hydration and fluid replacement is a daily process. Participants and parents should be informed to hydrate themselves before, during and after practice. Participants and parents should also be informed that meals should include an appropriate amount of fluid intake in addition to a healthy diet. Teach participants about the dangerous heat illness signs and symptoms and how to monitor each.
5. Give adequate rest periods. Remove appropriate equipment or clothing when possible. Exposed skin cools more efficiently. Remind participants to wear clothes that are light in weight and color.
6. Gradually acclimatize participants to the heat.
 - a. Research indicates 80% acclimatization may be achieved in seven to ten (7-10) days, but could take up to fourteen (14) days. In some cases, it may take several weeks to become fully acclimated.
 - b. The length and intensity of practice should be adjusted according to the Heat Index until acclimatization occurs.
7. Participants that coaches need to carefully monitor include:
 - a. Participants who have recently had a flu illness (e.g. intestinal viruses).
 - b. Participants who are overweight or have weight control problems.
 - c. Participants whose parents have informed coaches that they are taking over-the-counter and prescription medication/supplements.
 - d. Participants who have done absolutely no exercise at all or participants who you know little about.

Cold Weather Recommendations

- The wind chill factor should be used to determine the severity of the cold temperatures, NOT just the temperature alone.
- Do not start an activity in an extremely wet and cold environment.
- Warm-up and properly stretch participants until immediately before the activity.
- Participants and parents should be informed:
 - Clothing should be selected for comfort.
 - Do not overdress.
 - Multiple layers provide good insulation.
- Properly cover the head, neck, legs and hands. Extreme cold blocks some sensations of pain. Thus, frostbite can easily affect the fingers, toes, ears, and facial areas.
- Drink plenty of water or warm fluids if possible. Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Stay active to maintain body heat.
- Have high-energy foods available, such as a chocolate bar. Sugar stimulates shivering which is the body's mechanism for re-warming itself.

Smog Alert Recommendations

Air Quality Index during the Smog Season, which is currently identified as May 1 through September 30, should be used for assessing the potential severity of the smog. This information is available at the State of Georgia Agency of Natural Resources - Air Pollution Control website www.air.dnr.state.ga.us. Check for "Smog Alert Days" prior to every practice and game. On "Smog Alert Days", plan limited outdoor practice and games during the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. when smog levels tend to be the highest.

On Code Orange days: For the elementary and middle school age participants limit outdoor activities by holding activities in the morning, reducing the normal length of the activity and/or doing activities which require moderate to low levels of exertion. For high school age participants, coaches should inform parents and participants of the potential health risk related to outside activities during the alert days. The participant/parent shall be responsible for the participation limitation of outside activities without fear of repercussions or penalty from anyone.

On Code Red days: For elementary and middle school age participation, NO OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES. For high school age participants coaches should inform parents and participants the potential health risk related to outside activities during the alert days. The participant/parent shall be responsible for the participation limitation of outside activities without fear of repercussions or penalty from anyone. Limit planned outdoor activities and those which are planned should be moderate to low exertion levels. Practices and games should be held early in the morning and/or later in the evening to avoid times when conditions are generally more severe.

On Code Purple and Code Black days: NO OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGE GROUPS.