

Cold Weather Guidelines

Introduction:

Cold exposure can be uncomfortable, impair performance and even become life threatening. Conditions created by cold exposure include frostbite and hypothermia. Wind-chills can make activity uncomfortable and can impair performance when muscle temperature declines. Frostbite is the freezing of superficial tissues, usually of the face, ears, fingers, and toes. Hypothermia, a significant drop in body temperature, occurs with rapid cooling, exhaustion, and energy depletion. The resulting failure to the temperature- regulating mechanisms constitutes a medical emergency.

Hypothermia frequently occurs at temperatures above freezing. A wet and windy 30 –50-degree exposure may be as serious as a sub zero exposure. Wind speed interacts with ambient temperature to significantly increase body cooling. When the body and clothing are wet (whether from sweat, rain, snow, or immersion), the cooling is even more pronounced due to evaporation of the water held close to the skin by the wet clothing.

Clothing is one of the most important parts of keeping the athlete's body warm. Athletes should dress in layers and attempt to stay dry. Layers can be added or removed depending on temperature, activity, and wind chill. Athletes should layer themselves with an undergarment, such as cold weather Under Armour or a like product, next to the body followed by lightweight pile or wool layers for warmth. Athletes should use a wind block garment to avoid wind chill during workouts. Heat loss from the head and neck may be as much as 50% of total heat loss, therefore the head and neck should be covered during cold conditions. Other extremities should be always covered to protect from the wind chill.

Cold Exposure:

- ✓ Breathing of cold air can trigger asthma attacks (bronchospasm).
- ✓ Coughing, chest tightness, burning sensation in throat and nasal passage.
- ✓ Reduction of strength, power, endurance, and aerobic capacity.
- ✓ Core body temperature reduction, causing reduction of motor output.
- ✓ Sick cell, cold weather exacerbates this condition.

Cold Recognition:

- ✓ Shivering, a means for the body to generate heat.
- ✓ Excessive shivering contributes to fatigue, loss of motor skills.
- ✓ Numbness and pain in fingers, toes, ears, and exposed facial tissue.
- ✓ Drop in core temperature; athlete exhibits sluggishness, slowed speech, or disoriented.



Environmental Assessment

- ✓ Evaluate immediate and projected weather information, including wind chill temperature, wind, chance of precipitation or water immersion, and altitude.
- ✓ Identify activity intensity requirements and clothing requirements for everyone.
- ✓ Have alternate plans in place for deteriorating conditions and activities that must be adjusted or cancelled.

Environmental Exposure: Duration of exposure should be modified for practice when reaching numbers specified.

*Consult your Athletic Trainer on campus for recommendations.

The following are guidelines established by the Sports Medicine Department & Athletics. The static temperature or wind chill temperatures will be utilized in determining if outdoor activities are safe for High School and Middle School practices, scrimmages, or games. Conditions should be constantly reevaluated for change in risk, including the presence of precipitation.

*Perry Weather will be utilized to attain these wind chill temperatures.

The Athletic Department and the Sports Medicine Department will cancel / reschedule all outdoor activities if actual or forecasted static temperature or wind chills reach thresholds listed below.

All outdoor activities – Cancellation / Rescheduling guidelines:

Dry (No Precipitation)

High School and Middle School

- ✓ Temperature at 30 degrees or below.
- ✓ Wind Chill at 27 or below.
- ✓ Transportation is unsafe for travel.
- ✓ Field conditions are unsafe for competition.

Wet (With Precipitation)

High School and Middle School

- ✓ Temperature at 33 degrees or below.
- ✓ Wind Chill at 30 or below.
- ✓ Transportation is unsafe for travel.
- ✓ Field conditions are unsafe for competition.

The Athletic Department considers environmental conditions, wind chill factor, and safety of play.

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/cold/windchill-images/windchillchart3.pdf>

Revision: 1-7-2025