



Extreme Weather Protocols

Purpose

To provide guidelines and procedures for responding to extreme weather conditions that may impact school operations, student safety, staff safety, and continuity of educational services. This is intended to support preparedness, response, and recovery efforts related to extreme heat, poor air quality, wildfire smoke, severe weather, flooding, lightning, dust storms, and other hazardous environmental conditions.

Scope

This protocol applies to all school staff, students, visitors, volunteers, contractors, and school-sponsored activities occurring on school property or during off-campus school activities.

Activation Criteria

This protocol may be activated when actual or forecasted environmental conditions create a potential risk to the health, safety, or well-being of students, staff, or visitors, including but not limited to:

- Extreme heat conditions
- Air Quality Index (AQI) conditions impacting outdoor activities
- Severe weather conditions
- Flooding or flash flooding
- Lightning storms
- High wind events or dust storms
- Utility failures related to weather conditions
- Recommendations or warnings from the National Weather Service (NWS), local emergency management, public health agencies, or air quality agencies

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities may be carried out by one or more staff members depending on the size and scope of the emergency and the number of individuals impacted. Additional roles and responsibilities may be identified and assigned at the discretion of supervisory staff.

District Administration (Superintendent or designee)

- Oversees implementation of the Extreme Weather Protocols
- Coordinates decision-making regarding school operations, outdoor activities, and protective actions
- Coordinates with district administration, emergency management, public health agencies, and first responders

School Administration

- Monitor weather and air quality conditions
- Communicate operational decisions and protective actions
- Provide updates regarding operational changes, closures, or safety measures
- Coordinate sheltering, activity modifications, or evacuations if necessary

Health Staff

- Monitor students and staff for signs of heat-related illness or respiratory distress
- Review Individualized Health Plans (IHPs), 504 accommodations, and medical alerts for weather-related considerations
- Coordinate medical response and referrals when needed

Facilities and Maintenance Personnel

- Monitor HVAC performance and indoor environmental conditions
- Identify cooling areas or safer indoor shelter areas

Teachers and Supervising Staff

- Follow all protective action directives
- Monitor students for signs of illness or distress
- Ensure students remain hydrated and supervised during weather-related incidents

Monitoring Conditions

Schools should monitor:

- [National Weather Service forecasts](#) & [Heat Risk Grid](#)
- [Air Quality Index](#)
- Local emergency notifications and weather warnings

Training and Awareness

- Train staff to recognize signs of heat-related illness and respiratory distress
- Review evacuation, shelter, and continuity procedures annually

Resource Allocation

Ensure availability of:

- Drinking water
- Cooling areas
- Communication devices
- First aid supplies
- Emergency medications
- Portable fans or cooling equipment when appropriate

During an Incident

Depending on the hazard, schools may implement one or more Emergency Response Procedures consistent with School Safety Plans.

Examples include:

- **Shelter in Place:**
 - “Shelter in Place for Severe Weather— Stay Inside”
 - “Shelter in Place for Poor Air Quality — Recess Will Be Held Indoors”
 - “Shelter in Place for Lightning — Move Indoors”
- **Evacuate:**

May be used if buildings become unsafe due to flooding, utility failures, structural concerns, or environmental hazards.

Extreme Heat Procedures

Schools should consider the following actions during periods of extreme heat:

Hydration

- Provide frequent opportunities for hydration
- Encourage students and staff to drink water even if not thirsty
- Increase hydration breaks during outdoor activities

Outdoor Activities

- Modify, relocate, postpone, or cancel outdoor activities during elevated heat conditions
- Avoid strenuous outdoor activity during the hottest portions of the day, generally between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
- Consider moving activities indoors

Cooling Areas

- Provide access to air-conditioned or shaded areas
- Allow students and staff to rest as needed
- Monitor indoor temperatures when HVAC systems are strained or unavailable

Clothing and Sun Protection

- Encourage lightweight, light-colored clothing when appropriate
- Allow hats and sun-protective clothing during outdoor activities
- Permit sunscreen use in accordance with California Education Code §35183.5

Heat-Related Illness Monitoring

Monitor for signs of:

- Heat exhaustion
- Heat stroke
- Dehydration
- Fatigue or dizziness

School Heat Risk Guidelines & Safety Actions

*Use these guidelines in conjunction with [National Weather Service Heat Risk tool](#).

Heat Risk Level	Conditions	Individuals Most Affected	School Considerations
Green – Little to No Risk	Comfortable temperatures with low risk of heat illness	No elevated risk groups	Normal outdoor activities may continue; encourage hydration and water access
Yellow – Minor Risk	Moderately high temperatures tolerated by most individuals	Heat-sensitive students and staff	Increase hydration and cooling breaks; use shaded areas; monitor conditions frequently
Orange – Moderate Risk	Hot temperatures requiring additional attention	Unacclimated individuals and heat-sensitive groups	Limit strenuous outdoor activities; utilize shaded or cooled indoor areas; ensure frequent hydration
Red – Major Risk	Very hot temperatures with significant risk to many individuals	Students and staff participating in physical activity or direct sun exposure	Modify, reschedule, or relocate outdoor activities indoors when possible; closely monitor for signs of heat illness
Magenta – Extreme Risk	Extreme heat conditions dangerous for the general population	All individuals	Cancel outdoor activities; remain in cooled indoor environments; ensure frequent hydration and close health monitoring

Individuals at Higher Risk

Higher-risk individuals may include:

- Young children
- Students or staff with chronic medical conditions
- Pregnant individuals
- Individuals not acclimated to heat
- Heat-sensitive individuals

Recognizing Heat-Related Illness

Heat Exhaustion Signs

- Heavy sweating
- Weakness

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Cool or clammy skin
- Rapid pulse

Heat Exhaustion Response

- Move the individual to a cool or shaded area
- Loosen clothing
- Apply cool, wet cloths
- Provide small sips of water if alert
- Monitor closely
- Seek medical assistance if symptoms worsen

Heat Stroke Signs

- Confusion
- Slurred speech
- Hot skin
- Collapse
- Seizures
- Unconsciousness
- Rapid, strong pulse

Heat Stroke Response

- Call 911 immediately
- Move the person to a cool area
- Begin active cooling measures immediately
- Continue cooling while awaiting EMS

Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency.

Poor Air Quality and Wildfire Smoke Procedures

Schools can monitor AQI conditions and local air quality guidance using:

- [PurpleAir](#) - 3 monitors exist within the district
- [Airnow.gov](#)
- Local emergency notifications

Guidance should include consideration of:

- Outdoor activity modifications
- Outdoor air quality conditions

- HVAC performance

School Outdoor Air Quality Activity Recommendations

Activity	AQI 0–50 Good	AQI 51–100 Moderate	AQI 101–150 Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	AQI 151–200 Unhealthy	AQI 201–300 Very Unhealthy	AQI 301–500 Hazardous
Recess	No restrictions	Monitor sensitive students and consider indoor recess if needed	Exercise indoors or avoid vigorous outdoor activities	No outdoor activity; move indoors	No outdoor activity; move indoors	No outdoor activity; move indoors
Physical Education	No restrictions	Consider accommodations or indoor PE for sensitive students	Exercise indoors or avoid vigorous outdoor activities	No outdoor activity; move indoors	No outdoor activity; move indoors	No outdoor activity; move indoors
Athletic Practice & Training	No restrictions	Monitor and accommodate sensitive students	Exercise indoors or avoid vigorous outdoor activities	No outdoor activity; move indoors	No outdoor activity; move indoors	No outdoor activity; move indoors
Scheduled Sporting Events	No restrictions	Monitor conditions and student health	Hold event indoors or avoid vigorous outdoor activities	Reschedule, relocate, or move indoors	Reschedule, relocate, or move indoors	Reschedule, relocate, or move indoors

Additional Air Quality Considerations

- All children are considered sensitive to poor air quality because their lungs and immune systems are still developing.
- Students and staff with asthma, respiratory illnesses, heart conditions, or other health concerns may require additional accommodations.
- Indoor activity areas should have cleaner air than outdoor environments.
- Schools may consider operational modifications or closures during significantly unhealthy air quality events.
- School closure decisions should consider indoor air quality, supervision capabilities, transportation conditions, and guidance from local agencies.

Cleaner Indoor Air Strategies

Schools may:

- Close doors and windows when outdoor air quality is poor

- Reduce outside air intake when appropriate
- Maintain HVAC filtration systems

Severe Weather Procedures

Lightning

- Suspend outdoor activities immediately
- Move all students and staff indoors
- Avoid open fields, metal objects, and outdoor structures

Flooding

- Avoid flooded areas
- Relocate students and staff from impacted areas
- Monitor transportation routes and drainage areas

High Winds/Dust Storms

- Move individuals indoors
- Secure outdoor equipment if safe to do so
- Limit exposure to blowing dust and debris

School Closure Considerations

School closure decisions remain a local decision based on:

- Severity of environmental conditions
- Indoor air quality
- Ability to maintain safe operations
- Utility impacts
- Transportation safety
- Recommendations from public health or emergency officials

Schools should consider:

- Student supervision needs
- Access to meals and support services
- Continuity of instruction
- Impacts on medically vulnerable students and staff

Provisions After the Incident

Recovery Actions

- Assess facilities for damage or operational concerns

- Restore HVAC and ventilation systems to normal operation
- Reopen outside air dampers after smoke events
- Evaluate indoor environmental conditions before resuming normal operations

Health Monitoring and Support

- Continue monitoring affected individuals
- Provide counseling or support services as needed
- Review any medical incidents or exposures

Debriefing and Improvement Planning

- Conduct after-action reviews
- Identify lessons learned and operational improvements
- Update procedures and training as needed

Communication

- Notify families and staff regarding operational status changes
- Provide health and safety guidance following the event
- Share available support resources when appropriate

What Staff and Students Should Know

- Extreme weather conditions can rapidly impact health and safety
- Hydration and access to cooling are critical during heat events
- Poor air quality may not always be visible
- Individuals with asthma, respiratory conditions, or heart conditions may be more affected
- Outdoor activities may be modified or canceled during unsafe conditions
- Staff and students should immediately report symptoms of illness or unsafe environmental conditions
- Follow all standard response protocol directives and staff instructions during weather emergencies

References

- [CDPH Heat Risk Grid](#)
- [Heat-related illness](#)
- [BP 5141.75 Weather Safety](#)
- [National Weather Service HeatRisk](#)
- [Shasta County School Air Quality Activity Recommendations](#)
- [PurpleAir](#)
- [Airnow.gov](#)
- [Wildfire Evacuation Decision Tree](#)

