



MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

Mass Youth Soccer Weather Policy

Weather conditions are the responsibility of the game officials, coaches, tournament directors and club administrators. All should be aware of the potential dangers posed by different weather conditions and work together to keep the players and other participants as safe as possible. If the weather conditions warrant, game officials and coaches should discuss before the game starts what the procedures will be to insure the safety of the players. Tournament directors should monitor weather conditions including the warnings and watches issued by the National Weather Service. In the event of sudden changes, the tournament directors should have a means of sending warnings to the site officials. A weather plan should be provided to the participating teams to allow a clear understanding of shelter locations, evacuation plans and how the weather will affect tournament results. Club administrators should perform similar functions for league play.

Technology has improved the monitoring capability for all concerned. There are many new apps for phones and tablets that provide accurate and timely weather reports, forecasts and warnings. Lightning detectors can take the guesswork out of how far away lightning is. Cell phones and two-way radios can meet communication requirements to implement weather plans.

Preliminary Concerns

It is strongly recommended that clubs make sure their coaches all have the latest weather apps loaded on their phones. These apps should include instant weather conditions and lightning strike notification. Conditions in one location may be very different from another, especially the further apart the two locations are. The coaches are responsible for keeping informed of the weather conditions at home, along their route to the game and at the game site. The coaches are also responsible for communications with the opposing coach and their own team in the event of inclement weather. Discussions between the coaches must provide for common sense to prevail.

Severe Storms

Severe storms can produce high winds, heavy rain, hail, lightning, thunder and/or tornados. If a severe storm approaches the playing area, the safety of the players is the number one priority of coaches and referees, and may require that the game be suspended while shelter is sought. In the event the game is suspended, ALL participants MUST clear the field immediately and move into their cars or other permanent shelter.

High winds can create problems by dust and debris being in the air or blowing over objects. Heavy rain can create hazardous field conditions or lead to flash flooding. Hail can cause injury. Lightning and thunder is discussed separately below. Tornados are obvious dangers of any severe storm. Use common sense and seek shelter as appropriate.

Thunder and Lightning

Lightning is the second leading cause of storm-related deaths (flooding is first). Lightning can strike up to 10 miles outside of a thunderstorm, literally a bolt from the blue. The danger from lightning can persist for 20-30 minutes or more after a thunderstorm has passed. The National Weather Service does not issue watches or warnings for lightning by itself. However, the National Weather Service does advise that if you see a lightning bolt and hear the thunder in 30 seconds or less, you seek shelter and wait 30 minutes before resuming outdoor activity.

If a person can hear thunder, or see lightning, the danger already is present. A clear, sunny sky overhead with storm clouds nearby can still be dangerous.

Referees and Coaches should adhere to the following:

- If lightning is within five miles, with or without hearing thunder, the game(s) or practice(s) should be suspended and shelter sought. A lightning detector or similar app can identify the distance accurately but may not be available. A rough guideline is to **measure the time between the lightning flash and hearing**

the corresponding thunder. If it is 30 seconds or less, seek shelter. It may not be possible to determine which lightning strike generated which roll of thunder. A simple rule: **If you can see it or hear it, clear it!**

- Mass Youth Soccer recommends that participants seek immediate shelter in their automobiles or a designated severe weather shelter, if there is one nearby. Smaller, open structures, tents, trees, isolated areas, etc, should be avoided. Cars, with windows rolled up or buses, can provide good shelter. Avoid contact with metal or other conducting materials to the outside surfaces. Do not stay in open, unprotected areas.
- **Games should not be restarted for at least 30 minutes** after the last lightning strike is seen or roll of thunder is heard.
- Tournaments should inform participating teams of notification and evacuation plans and shelters near the playing sites.

Hot Weather

Heat is a problem when it prevents the body from cooling itself. The hotter the body gets, the more likely it is to increase fatigue levels, develop cramps and increase the possibility of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. The hotter and more humid the weather, the faster these problems can develop. Temperatures as low as 65 degrees, with a relative humidity of 100%, can be serious.

1. A heat index chart should be given to every coach and referee (www.nws.noaa.gov)
2. Games need to be adjusted as the heat index rises:
 - a. Mandatory water breaks
 - b. Go to quarters
 - c. Shorten the games
3. Provide training to coaches to teach the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Club administrators and tournament officials are responsible for monitoring the heat index (by weather radio, online or the Weather Channel) and keeping the participating teams and game officials informed of the heat index. Coaches are encouraged to also monitor the conditions. The following are recommended when there is a possibility of dangerous high heat index:

Heat Index Recommendations

Up to 84°

Normal Play

85° - 89°

Mandatory two-minute water breaks per half with running time.

90° - 99°

Mandatory two-minute water breaks per half with running time. Each half shortened by five minutes.

100° - 104°

Mandatory two-minute water breaks per half with running time. Each half shortened by ten minutes.

105°+

Suspend Play

For further information, please check the NOAA website for additional information in regards to how temperature and humidity combine to make it feel hotter.

Special Heat Rules for TOPSoccer

If the heat index exceeds 90 degrees, the practice or game is immediately suspended. If the National Weather Service issues a heat index warning that will exceed 90 degrees, the MYSATOPSoccer Committee Chairperson (or designee) will notify TOPSoccer administrators by 1:00 p.m. on practice/game day that practices/games are suspended. Parents and/or legal guardians should also listen for heat warnings and take appropriate action.

Cold Weather

For fall play, cold becomes a factor. Players should be allowed to dress in appropriate clothing. Field conditions will be affected by freezing rain, sleet and snow. The ground may become frozen and be unsafe for play. Temperature means either ambient (still air) or wind chill index. Check weather radio frequently for temperature and weather conditions.

Cold Index Recommendations

46° and higher

No Change

45° and lower

Allowable Additional Clothing:

- Layered beneath uniform (for example)
 - long sleeves
 - long pants
 - additional socks
- Gloves or mittens
- Stocking caps without straps
- Sweat pants or shirts - In the case of extremely cold weather, may be worn underneath the uniform, provided the entire team uses the same color sweats
- Jackets may be worn under the uniform so that referees can see the player's number in the event of a card being issued.

Clothing NOT Allowed:

- Hooded sweatshirts
 - hoods and strings present possibility of being grabbed
- Ear muffs (headbands OK)
 - plastic or metal part crossing top of head presents potential hazard
- Scarves
 - Isadora Duncan Syndrome

40° and lower

Above + Shorten games by 5 min/half

35° and lower

Suspend games

- Players on sidelines should remain dressed (if in warm-ups) until they enter the game.
- Players coming off should towel off (if sweaty) and get dressed quickly.
- No one should sit or lie directly on ground. The heat is lost faster to ground than to air. Blankets and chairs are recommended.
- Keep hydrated-avoid caffeine and carbonated drinks.
- Keep an eye on field conditions (wet, icy, etc.). Cold wet conditions can quickly change field from safe footing to slippery.
- Keep an eye on the goalie—usually the player who gets coldest first, as not running or moving like a field player.
- Referees and coaches should discuss weather and fields pre-game.
- Safety and health of the players come first.