

Somerset West Soccer Club

Policy No. 004

Weather/Environmental-Related Field Closures and Activity Cancellations

Adopted: April 15, 2020

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the conditions under which fields may be closed and Somerset West Soccer Club (SWSC or Club) team practices and games and other club-sponsored activities (e.g. jamboree, coach clinic, etc.) canceled for weather or other environmental reasons. It also describes the various processes for closures and cancellations.

2. Background

There are a number of weather and environmental conditions that can threaten player, coach, and spectator safety and health and/or risk damage to fields, and give rise to a need to close fields and/or cancel team practices, games, or other league or club-sponsored activities. They include excessive heat, lightning, heavy rain, significantly degraded air quality (e.g., wildfire smoke, smog), snow, and freezing temperatures. In view of the threats, it's important that the Club have a policy to address the circumstances and processes for weather/environmental-related closures/cancellations.

The SWSC is a standalone non-profit organization that operates three recreational soccer programs - an internal microsoccer program for kindergartners and first graders and separate programs for second (G-2) through eighth graders (G-8) and high school players. Both of the older age group programs involve inter-club and inter-league play. In order to operate these programs, the Club maintains relationships with other organizations to gain access to fields, facilitate inter-organization play, and coordinate game and referee scheduling.

The two affiliated organizations most directly involved with weather/environmental-related closures and cancellations are the Tualatin Hills Junior Soccer League (THJSL or League), which schedules and oversees all second grade through high school games, and the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District (THPRD or Park District), which currently provides all fields used by the Club for G2-G8 and high school program practices, microsoccer practices and games, and other Club events. The Park District also provides fields for most second grade through high school games. The only exceptions are for games played on out-of-district fields (e.g., Sherwood, Tigard, Tualatin, Hillsboro) to facilitate inter-organization competition.

Another organization that can play a role in the closure/cancellation process is the Beaverton School District (BSD or School District). Many THPRD-maintained fields belong to the School District and are located at BSD schools. Actions taken by the

School District to close specific school fields or suspend student outdoor sports activities can influence League and/or Park District closure/cancellation decisions.

Within the structure described above and as specified in this policy, there are a number of individuals and organizations with the authority to close fields and/or cancel activities for weather/environmental-related conditions. They include team coaches, referees, the Club, the League, the Park District, and the owners/operators of out-of-district fields.

3. Field Closures

- A. The only organizations with the authority to close Club-utilized fields for weather/environmental reasons are the field owners or those who maintain and operate the fields under agreement with the owner. For nearly all fields within the League boundaries, that authority is the Park District. Some exceptions are the Oak Hills Homeowner's Association fields utilized by the Oak Hills club and the Tektronix fields utilized by the Milltown club. Out-of-district fields used for inter-organizational play can be closed by the owners/operators of those fields.
- B. THPRD maintains a policy that provides inclement weather guidelines for clubs and coaches. The policy describes the conditions under which the Park District may close a field or fields for games and other uses. The policy, which is provided to all coaches with their seasonal field use permit, only addresses rain, snow, frost, slush, and freezing temperatures. It does not address other hazards such as lightning, excessive heat, or smoke/smog.
- C. When the Park District closes all of its maintained fields, that information is communicated to the League and representatives of all clubs within the League. Each club is then responsible for notifying its coaches. When the closure only applies to specific fields, the League and affected clubs are notified. The League (for League games) and the clubs (for all other activities) are then responsible for notifying the affected coaches.
- D. If the School District acts on its own to close a school field maintained by THPRD and used by the League or Club, the School District will notify THPRD and the Park District will, in turn, notify the League and affected club.

4. Activity (Game/Practice/Other) Cancellations

Several organizations and individuals have the authority to cancel a specific activity or multiple activities simultaneously - coaches, referees, the Club, and the League.

- A. The Park District does not have the authority to cancel League or Club activities; however, by closing fields it can have the same effect or at least force movement of the activities to other sites if available. Similarly, the School District doesn't have the authority to cancel League or Club activities.

However, by suspending student outdoor sports activities, it can lead to a cancellation of all League and Club activities. THPRD has typically followed the actions of the School District when it suspended student outdoor sports activities for excessive heat and severe wildfire smoke by recommending that the League and clubs consider cancellation of all activities. When the School District suspends outdoor student activities, that message is conveyed to the Park District who, in turn, relays the information to the League and club representatives. Based on the School District's action and after consideration of the conditions driving it, the League may direct that all League activities be canceled or make that recommendation to the clubs for their consideration. Each club will then advise its coaches of the cancellation or recommendation.

- B. THPRD's Inclement Weather Guidelines provide guidance to clubs and coaches on field conditions that should lead to cancellation of a game, practice, or other activity when any of those conditions are present. If the Park District hasn't otherwise closed the field(s), individual coaches (for practices), both coaches (for microsoccer games), and both coaches and the referee (for G2-G8 and high school games) are expected to decide whether to proceed or cancel based on the guidelines and field conditions. The Park District's policy does not address lightning, excessive heat, or smoke/smog. In the absence of direction or recommendations from the Club or League, coaches should consider the hazard-specific information in Tab A to this policy to assist with their decision-making. Since any cancellations of this nature are coach/referee-driven, the primary communication that needs to occur is between the coaches and their teams. However, it's also important that Club microsoccer coaches notify the Club Microsoccer Coordinator if they cancel a practice/game and that Club G-2 through G-8 and high school program coaches notify the Club Head Coach and League President if a game is canceled at the field.
- C. The Club has the authority to cancel any Club activities. That includes microsoccer practices/games, practices for all other age groups, and other activities such as jamborees and coaching clinics. However, the Club will typically not act on its own to cancel anything but "other activities." It will either follow the direction of the League, relay League recommendations to the coaches for consideration, or leave cancellation decisions to the coaches and referees as noted above. If the Club decides to cancel an activity or activities, a Club representative will relay that information to the affected coaches or activity coordinator.

5. Policy

A. General

- 1) The Club will follow the direction of the League and the Park District whenever those organizations act within their authority to close fields or cancel games or practices. Similarly, the Club will follow the direction of other organizations who cancel games on out-of-district fields.

- 2) Since the SWSC microsoccer program is Club-sponsored and managed, the Club will make its own game/practice cancellation decisions in the absence of THPRD field closure or THJSL cancellation directions.
- 3) When the League or Park District recommend that clubs consider canceling practices and any other outdoor activities, the Club will evaluate conditions and may act to cancel those activities or simply pass the recommendation through to Club coaches for their consideration and decision-making.
- 4) SWSC coaches will act as indicated below:
 - a) Follow the direction of the Club, League, and/or Park District when those organizations close fields or cancel games, practices, or other on-field activities.
 - b) When presented with a recommendation rather than direction, consider the recommendation and the attached hazard-specific guidelines, evaluate the conditions, consult with others as time permits (e.g., assistant coaches, team parents, opposing coach for microsoccer practices/games) then proceed with or cancel the activity.
 - c) In the absence of direction or recommendations, consider the THPRD inclement weather policy and the attached hazard-specific guidelines, evaluate the conditions, consult with others as time permits (e.g., referee, opposing coach, assistant coaches, team parents) then proceed with or cancel the activity. Note, however, that League-scheduled games cannot be canceled unilaterally by a coach for weather/environmental reasons. Such decisions must be made on the field in consultation with the game referee and opposing coach.
 - d) Communicate with their teams as quickly as possible regarding closures and cancellations and, as time permits, seek input from the team when decision-making is in the coaches' hands.

Tab A - SWSC Hazard-Specific Weather and Environmental Condition Guidelines for Activity Cancellation

Tab A
SWSC Policy No. 004

**SWSC Hazard-Specific Weather and Environmental Condition Guidelines
for Activity Cancellations**

These guidelines are intended to be used by SWSC coaches to assist in decision-making around practice, game, or other activity cancellation due to weather or other environmental conditions. Use of the guidelines should only be necessary when the Park District, League, or Club have not acted separately to close fields or cancel activities. Note, however, that no League-sponsored game (i.e., G2 - G8 and High School games) can be canceled by a single coach. Those decisions must be made at the field in consultation with the referee and opposing coach.

The guidelines incorporate key provisions of THPRD's Inclement Weather Guidelines and parallel state and/or national guidelines where they exist. The National Weather Service's Portland office is the best source for monitoring nearly all of the weather conditions noted below (<https://www.weather.gov/pqr/>). The primary exception is for wildfire smoke and smog. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's air quality monitoring site provides the best information for those hazards (<https://oraqi.deq.state.or.us/home/map>).

Heavy Rain

Activities should be canceled if any of the following conditions exist:

Grass Fields

- There has been one inch or more of rain in the past 12 hours or significant rainfall in the hours before use
- Heavy rain is falling on a frozen surface
- When stepping on the playing surface, water either shoots up from the ground or is present around your foot
- The ground is wet enough that a foot sinks into the turf or leaves a print
- Visible bodies/pools of water are present on the field (one to two inches deep)
- There is slick mud on the field

Synthetic Turf Fields

- Visible bodies/pools of water are present on the field
- Significant rain has fallen after an extended period of time where the temperature was 32°F or lower
- The air temperature is below freezing following significant rainfall in the past two hours

Ice/Snow/Sleet/Slush/Hail

Activities should be canceled if ice, snow, frost, slush, or hail is present on the playing surface.

Freezing Temperatures

Freezing temperatures on their own are generally not a reason to cancel an activity. However, cancellation is appropriate if the freezing temperature is accompanied by any of the conditions noted above, the temperature has been below freezing for an extended period and the ground is frozen, or the temperature is low enough to present a health threat.

Lightning

Suspensions or cancellations of activities due to lightning are almost always a coach and/or referee decision that happens just prior to or during an activity. A forecast of lightning is not, in and of itself, reason to cancel an activity. The presence of lightning in the area does, however, require that coaches and referees evaluate the conditions and take appropriate action. The greatest threat from lightning comes from cloud to ground lightning strikes. Other forms of lightning - cloud to cloud, intra-cloud, and cloud to air - present less risk to people and property on the ground. Nearby lightning is typified by a large crack or boom whereas distant lightning may sound more like a rumble or you may not hear anything at all. While lightning has been recorded to strike from a distance of 10 miles, the rule of thumb used for safety is a six mile distance.

With this background, a typical way to assess the threat is to use the flash-to-bang method. Count the seconds between the time you see a lightning strike and when you hear the thunder then divide the number of seconds by five. That will give a rough estimate of the distance in miles from the lightning.

If the conditions warrant and time permits, cancel the activity before it gets started. If lightning moves into the area while an activity is underway, suspend the activity and seek shelter. If an activity is suspended, the rule of thumb is to not resume the activity until 30 minutes after the active threat has ended. All decisions regarding cancellation and suspension due to lightning should consider the field upon which the activity is occurring or will occur. Some fields are located at schools where cover is readily available (e.g., Elmonica, Rock Creek). Many others are located in parks or large complexes where no cover is available (e.g., Powerlines, PCC Rock Creek).

Excessive Heat

- Consider limiting active play and/or taking more frequent water breaks when a Heat Advisory has been issued by the National Weather Service.
- Consider canceling or otherwise limit the amount of active play and take more frequent water breaks when an Excessive Heat Warning has been issued by the National Weather Service.
- Cancel G2-G8 and high school program practices, microsoccer practices/games, and other club activities if an Excessive Heat Warning has been issued by the National Weather Service and the temperature during the activity is over 105°F.

- If not canceled by the League on a blanket level, G2-G8 and high school program game cancellations must be made at the field in consultation with the opposing coach and referee.

Wildfire Smoke/Smog

- Consider canceling or otherwise limit the amount of active play when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is in the Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups range (i.e., 101 - 150) as reported by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Although the general public is not likely to be affected at this AQI range, people with lung disease, older adults, and children are at a greater risk from exposure to ozone, whereas persons with heart and lung disease, older adults, and children are at greater risk from the presence of particles in the air.
- Cancel when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is in the Unhealthy range (151 - 200) or higher. At the Unhealthy level, everyone may begin to experience health effects and members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.