

Background

Our local weather can prove to be challenging at times, especially for planned school activities. Student safety is always our top priority, and we are committed to working with parents to always create safe conditions for our students and for all activities. We have recently updated our weather and air quality restrictions to support schools in this work and we ask that you review these updates below so that you are aware of the guidelines.

Air Quality Restrictions for Outdoor Activities:

AQHI		Response
1-3	Low Health Risk	Continue as normal.
4-6	Moderate Health Risk	Restrict the level of activities. Reduce the intensity and duration of any strenuous activities. Provide resting periods. Indoor recess for students with health issues that may be impacted by air quality.
7-10	High Health Risk	Reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Implement indoor recess and lunch supervision for all students.
10+	Very High Health Risk	Cancel activities outdoors. Implement indoor recess and lunch supervision for all students.

Note: Air quality may vary. Principals should make decisions based on local conditions. The following link provides detailed measurements for air quality in Alberta, and is updated hourly: <http://airquality.alberta.ca/map/>. (Please note: this link will be the official resource used to make decisions of cancellations based on air quality.)

Temperature Restrictions for Outdoor Activities:

Outdoor Breaks at School

We recognize the value of outdoor breaks such as recess and lunch during the school day, however, when the weather is cold, outdoor breaks may not be a viable option.

When temperatures reach -22 degrees Celsius or colder including the wind-chill factor, students will be kept inside for recess or lunch breaks (the exception is schools participating in the Polar Bear Club). The -22 degrees Celsius guideline is comparable to other school jurisdictions in Alberta and across Canada.

Please note: this temperature is provided as a guideline and may be adjusted for the school/activity (such as the Polar Bear Club).

Polar Bear Club

Schools may choose to implement a “Polar Bear Club” which is an option to go outside during an indoor recess (weather is below -22 degrees Celsius) as long as the student has:

- a. returned a permission form signed by a parent or guardian, and
- b. is dressed appropriately for the weather (snow boots, snow pants, winter jacket, mittens/gloves, face covered, head/ears covered)

Please note: students with a signed permission form still have the choice to stay inside during any indoor recess.

Polar Bear Club will be offered at the discretion of our school administration and will be supervised outside by staff. The Polar Bear Club recess may be reduced in length (i.e. 10-15 minutes instead of 20 minutes at lunch recess) as deemed appropriate. Some days, depending on the severity of the weather, or the availability of ‘all-weather’ staff supervisors, the Polar Bear Club may not be offered.

Off-Site Activities (Field trips)

When temperatures reach -22 degrees Celsius or colder including the wind-chill factor, all outdoor-based off-site activities will be postponed or canceled.

Off-site activities to indoor destinations within the City of Medicine Hat can go ahead as long as the school is appropriately addressing the transportation hazards (for example, needing to wait for a replacement bus should a break-down occur).

The target number for off-site activities is based on an understanding that students are taught about appropriate layering principles and adequate clothing for handling outdoor activity conditions.

Any temperature outside can be hazardous if students are not dressed for conditions. The Teacher-in-Charge should ensure students are properly dressed for transport to the activities if the worst happens.

Please note: a school may choose to postpone or cancel at a temperature warmer than this number depending on the activity or age of the students.

Field trip travel is not allowed when:

For activities that involve travel outside of the City of Medicine Hat, travel is not allowed when Severe Weather exists.


Severe Weather Determination:

Any of the following factors, or a combination of them, shall serve as an indicator that severe weather conditions exist:

1. Temperature, experienced with or without wind-chill, of -40°C or below as identified via the [WeatherCAN](#) app;
2. Visibility of less than five hundred (500) metres as determined by [511 Alberta](#);
3. Reports from bus drivers and/or counties or municipalities that rural roads are, or will soon be, impassable;
4. Notification of severe weather through Alberta Emergency Alert;

5. A winter storm warning has been issued by Environment Canada for areas along the route being travelled or at the destination;
6. The RCMP has issued a Travel Advisory (travel not advised) for any portion of the planned route.
7. Road conditions are rated as "closed" for any portion of the planned route on Alberta Transportation's Road Reports.

If conditions worsen while at the destination and a delay in the field trip return is necessary, the contingency plans outlined in the school's Off-Site Activity proposal will guide the next steps. Plans should include provision for an additional night's stay at a location.

Reference: http://airquality.alberta.ca/map/ WeatherCAN 511 Alberta	Approved: 
	Date Approved: May 2024
	Reviewed or Revised:

Note: References shall be updated as required and do not require additional approval

