

OUTDOOR AIR QUALITY GUIDELINES

Poor air quality can impact the health and performance of outdoor activity participants, including students and staff. Good Spirit School Division recognizes the potential short- and long-term effects of engaging in physical activity outdoors when the air quality is poor. Good Spirit School Division is committed to reducing the risk posed to participants in outdoor activities from poor air quality.

This document is intended to provide guidance to schools regarding outdoor activities with respect to air quality. Just as an outdoor activity may be canceled or rescheduled due to lightning or other weather conditions, it is essential to take similar actions to protect participants of outdoor activities when air quality is poor.

Definitions

Outdoor Activities: For the purpose of this document, outdoor activities include but are not limited to outdoor physical education, extracurricular activities, field trips, outdoor education activities, recess, and noon hour.

Air Quality: Air quality refers to the quality of outdoor air primarily related to weather, climate, and smoke (forest fires, grass fires, etc.). Air quality impacted by industry or emergent situations should be guided or directed by proper authorities.

Air Quality Scale: Air Quality is a measure by Environment Canada using the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) which is a 1-11 scale.

Air Quality Reporting: Good Spirit School Division and Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools is working to add air quality monitoring devices in several locations for the purpose of providing more accurate air quality reporting. The PurpleAir interactive map includes real time readings for the locations where monitors exist.

Guidelines

1. Good Spirit School Division will monitor outdoor air quality, particularly during fall and spring seasons when smoke from forest and grass fires are most prevalent.
2. When air quality warnings are issued by Environment Canada, principals, staff supervisors, and/or coaches will access the [Real-Time Air Quality Map](#) by PurpleAir to make a determination of the air quality in the area where the outdoor activity will occur.
3. Based on the nature of the activity, the duration of the activity, and the age of the participants decisions around outdoor activities will be made.
4. Outdoor Education Trips – Air quality can change quickly. If your school is planning an overnight or extended outdoor field trip, include in your trip itinerary contingency plans for AQHI. Check the conditions prior to leaving, have a plan to move activities indoors, and have a plan for an early return.

5. Rescheduling extra-curricular activities can pose significant logistical challenges, particularly when outside venues and special personnel, such as officials, are involved. In addition, many competitive high school sports are time-sensitive regarding proceeding to championships. When considering how air quality will impact extra-curricular events, schools are encouraged to work with school-based administrators, the athletic director, and the superintendent to determine an appropriate course of action.
6. Outdoor activities such as physical education classes, outdoor field trips, and/or extracurricular activities that are longer in duration and intensity will adhere to the following guidelines:

Health Risk	Air Quality Health Index	Health Messages		School Messages for Outdoor Activities
		General Population	At Risk Population*	
Low Risk	1-3	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	All planned outdoor activities can proceed.
Moderate Risk	4-6	No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous outdoor activities if you are experiencing symptoms.	All planned outdoor activities can proceed.
High Risk	7-10	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous outdoor activities if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.	Recess and lunch breaks can proceed but allow the option of coming indoors. Consider moving strenuous Physical Education / Wellness classes indoors. Consider postponing or adapting extra-curricular events with clean air breaks.
Very High Risk	11	Reduce or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.	Avoid strenuous outdoor activities. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	Allow for indoor recess and lunch breaks. Outdoor Physical Education / Wellness classes should move indoors. Extra-curricular events should be postponed or moved indoors, if possible.

Adapted from Environment Canada [Understanding Air Quality Health Index Messages](#)

*Individuals in the "At Risk Population" should consult the local Health Authority or health professionals for accurate advice about exercising and managing specific conditions.