



## **WEATHER POLICY**

The game of soccer is played in all types of weather – hot and cold, dry or wet. In the case of bad weather, the decision to cancel the game is left up to the referee at game time on the field. Because of the unpredictability of the weather, there is no way to determine if the game will be played until just before game time at the designated field. Coaches and players are asked to show up at the fields before any decision is made to cancel a game.

Please show up at the fields to determine if the game will be played. Games in process may be cancelled in the event of visible lightning or issued tornado warnings. If a game is cancelled, the game will be rescheduled at the discretion of the Merrill Soccer Association.

For games at division levels with no referees, coaches from both teams need to come to a consensus on whether or not the game should be cancelled due to poor weather conditions.

## **WEATHER REFERENCE**

### **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.

### **Lightning and Thunder**

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 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!**
- Merrill Soccer Association 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 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.

### 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.

Games need to be adjusted as the heat index rises – i.e. mandatory water breaks, go to quarters, shorten games, etc.

Officials are responsible for monitoring the heat index and keeping the participating teams and coaches informed of the heat index. The following are recommended when there is a possibility of dangerous high heat index:

### Heat Index Recommendations

Up to 89°	Normal Play
90°-99°	Mandatory two-minute water breaks per half with running time. Each half shortened by five minutes.
100°-105°	Mandatory two-minute water breaks per half with running time. Each half shortened by ten minutes.
105°+	Suspend play.