

## INCLEMENT WEATHER AND AIR QUALITY

### Background

The Division is committed to ensuring the physical safety of students. On occasions this will entail making decisions with respect to whether students engage in outdoor activities during inclement conditions.

Poor air quality and air quality advisories from Alberta Health Services have increased in frequency over the past several years. A major reason for air quality advisories has been smoke from wildfires both in Alberta and outside of Alberta. The Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) is used to share the air quality with Albertans in each community. Alberta Health Services recommends reducing the levels of outdoor physical activity to decrease the inhalation of airborne pollutants as individuals may experience temporary irritation of eyes and throat and possibly shortness of breath.

### Procedures

1. Decisions regarding student involvement in any outdoor activities should take into consideration inclement weather that may be related to any or all of the following conditions:
  - 1.1 Continuous rain
  - 1.2 Harsh wind
  - 1.3 Extreme cold
  - 1.4 Other severe conditions
2. Students are not to go outside for recess if the local temperature is  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  or colder, or if the temperature and wind chill factor combined are  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  or colder. When temperatures, inclusive of windchill, are between  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$ , schools have the discretion to shorten recesses.
  - 2.1 The source used for determining the local temperature shall be a credible source determined by the school's administration.
  - 2.2 The source chosen by the school administration shall remain consistent throughout the school year.
3. Each school should have locally developed procedures in place to address the following matters:
  - 3.1 When students arriving at the beginning of the day may enter the school on inclement days.

- 3.2 Communicating to students that they are to re-enter the school at the end of the day, on inclement days, if their transportation homeward is unavailable or delayed.
  - 3.3 Handling parental requests for students to remain indoors during recess.
  - 3.4 Handling students who are underdressed for the weather.
4. The school's inclement weather protocols should be periodically communicated, in the school's communications with families, at appropriate times.
5. Air quality may vary from community to community within the St. Thomas Aquinas School Division.
    - 5.1. Referencing the AQHI, principals will make decisions based on local conditions, with respect to the following:
      - 5.1.1 Field trips that involve outdoor activities and the air quality in the location
      - 5.1.2 Outside activities including recess and physical education classes.
      - 5.1.3 Any other outdoor activities that may be affected by the AQHI
6. Air Quality Health Index Guidelines for Outdoor Activities
    - 6.1 Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) is defined and measured by Alberta. Below are the recommended restrictions for outdoor activities related to air quality:

| Health Risk   | Air Quality Health Index. (AQHI) | Health Messages   |  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
|               |                                  | At Risk Population<br>(people with heart and lung conditions)                                     | General Population   |
| Low Risk      | 1 – 3                            | Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.  | Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.  |
| Moderate Risk | 4 – 6                            | Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms. | No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation. |

|                       |               |   |   |
|-----------------------|---------------|---|---|
| <b>High Risk</b>      | <b>7 – 10</b> | <b>Reduce or reschedule</b> strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.     | <b>Consider</b> reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation. |
| <b>Very High Risk</b> | <b>10+</b>    | <b>Avoid</b> strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion. | <b>Reduce or reschedule</b> strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.  |

References:

Alberta Environment, Air Quality Health Index