



ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY

Introduction

This policy focuses on the impact that adverse and extreme weather may have upon sessions and what action to take should there be doubt or concern regarding the safety of running a session. All information gathered to inform decisions made should be sourced from the **MET Office** in collaboration with the staff knowledge of the site(s) in question.

High Wind

High winds can pose risks to forest school sessions and activities in a number of ways; primarily due to the nature of our being situated within woodland beneath trees that can be affected by wind-speed/force.

A number of factors should be considered when assessing the potential risk of forecasted or observed winds: topography; the variety, age and species of trees; soil type; infrastructure; onsite facilities; (all of which have been considered in the following information).

When assessing wind-speed forecasts, the leading member of staff for a given session should rely upon forecasts given by the MET Office. Other forecasters can be used to gain an idea of the spectrum of forecasted wind, but ultimately the MET Office forecast should determine any action that need be taken.

MET office forecasts are issued in MPH (miles per hour). The MET office will forecast an hourly average wind-speed as well as the highest gust in any given hour. Details can be found at www.metoffice.gov.uk. These should be used in conjunction with the Beaufort scale to achieve insight into expected conditions in the woodland. The Beaufort scale is as follows;

FORC	MPH	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFICATION FOR USE ON LAND
E			
0	0 to 1	Calm	Calm; smoke rises vertically
1	1 to 3	Light air	Direction of wind shown by smoke drift, but not by wind vanes
2	4 to 7	Light breeze	Wind felt on face; leaves rustle, ordinary vanes moved by wind
3	8 to 12	Gentle breeze	Leaves and small twigs in constant motion; wind extends a light flag
4	13 to 18	Moderate breeze	Raises dust and loose paper; small branches are moved.
5	19 to 24	Fresh breeze	Small trees in leaf begin to sway; crested wavelets form on inland waters.
6	25 to 31	Strong breeze	Large branches in motion; whistling heard in telegraph wires; umbrellas used with difficulty.
7	32 to 38	Near gale	Whole trees in motion; inconvenience felt when walking against the wind.
8	39 to 46	Gale	Breaks twigs off trees; generally impedes progress.
9	47 to 54	Severe gale	Slight structural damage occurs (chimney-pots and slates removed).
10	55 to 63	Storm	Seldom experienced inland; trees uprooted; considerable structural damage occurs.
11	66 to 72	Violent storm	Very rarely experienced; accompanied by wide-spread damage.
12	73 to 83	Hurricane	* * * *

When to cancel sessions

The following table considers individual site characteristics and make up and dictates when a session should be cancelled as a result of actual/forecasted wind speed.

Wind including Gusts.	<31 mph (force 6)	32-39mph (force 7/8)	40-46mph (force 8)	>46mph (force 9)
Exeter & Kindergarten	Fine to run with no issue.	Fine to run, though be aware of impact of higher gusts on shelters and fire.	Continue if access to the classrooms available. If winds are consistently above 40mph, consider cancelling.	If at any point across session winds reach or pass 46 mph CANCEL.
Exmouth	Fine to run with no issue.	Fine to run, though consider impact of higher gusts on shelters and fire. Be extra aware as winds approach force 8.	CANCEL.	CANCEL.
Okehampton	Fine to run with no issue.	Fine to run, though consider impact of higher gusts on shelters and fire. Be aware as winds approach force 8.	CANCEL.	CANCEL.
Tiverton	Fine to run with no issue.	Fine to run, though consider impact of higher gusts on shelters and fire.	Continue if access to the classrooms available. If winds are consistently above 40mph, consider cancelling.	Only continue with session if using the classroom only. If this is not an option CANCEL.
Ext.school sites.	Fine to run with no issue.	Fine to run, though consider impact of higher gusts on shelters and fire.	Cancellation should be considered. Seek advice of manager.	CANCEL.

Acting upon a decision to cancel and Refund Policy

If the decision has been made to cancel a given session, the attendee's parent/guardian/carer should be contacted at the earliest reasonable convenience, preferably with at least 24 hours notice from the specified beginning time of the session. Should 24 hours notice not be possible due to reasons outside of our control (a forecast that changes for the worse for example) then the attendee's parent/guardian/carer will be contacted as soon as the decision is made.

For information on whether or not the cancellation warrants issuing a partial or full refund, refer to our Payments policy.

The above criteria can be difficult, if at all possible, to measure and judge on site for the time of observation. Much of the assessment of whether or not to run a session will be made (preferably 24 hours) prior to the session commencing with the information provided by the MET Office. **However**, leading staff are in a position of duty to cancel a session with regards to safety **at any point** and should use their experience and judgement to inform this decision at the time of cancellation, whether a given session has begun or not.

Low Temperature, Snow & Ice

A combination of low temperatures, snow and ice can lead to dangerous conditions for forest schools.

As managers we need to take into account the safety of our customers not only during the sessions, but also as they travel to and from our sites.

Heavy snow will cause the roads to become dangerous almost instantly, as well as the risk of people not being able to get their cars out of the car park and therefore be stuck.

Very low temperatures during sessions can also pose a risk, especially to the children, and should be factored in. The correct clothing worn during a short 2 hour session may be fine when the temperatures drop, but if you are running a long 6 hour session and do not have adequate inside space then this could be dangerous.

Weather Warnings and What They Mean (Please follow the MET Office for your decision making)

YELLOW: Severe weather is possible over the next few days and could affect you. Yellow means that you should plan ahead thinking about possible travel delays, or the disruption of your day to day activities. The Met Office is monitoring the developing weather situation and yellow means keep an eye on the latest forecast and be aware that the weather may change or worsen, leading to disruption of your plans in the next few days.

AMBER: There is an increased likelihood of bad weather affecting you, which could potentially disrupt your plans and possibly cause travel delays, road and rail closures, interruption to power and the potential risk to life and property. Amber means you need to be prepared to change your plans and protect you, your family and community from the impacts of the severe weather based on the forecast from the Met Office

RED: Extreme weather is expected. Red means you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the weather. Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life is likely. You must avoid dangerous areas and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.

- Further information can be found at www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/warnings

When To Cancel a Session

- Heavy snow (enough to settle on the roads) during a session that may make the roads dangerous or inhibit the customers being able to leave the car park

- Heavy snow the day before a session where the temperature does not go above freezing during the night, causing the roads to freeze (extra precaution taken for more remote forest school sites)
- Temperatures are below freezing, with a wind chill factor around the -5 to -10 range could be a cause for cancellation depending on the age of your children and any inside space you can utilise
- Any amber warnings issued for the days around your session
- Any red warnings issued for the days around your session

Electrical Storms, Flooding & other extreme weather conditions

The most likely weather conditions to cause disruption to sessions have been noted above, though other conditions may also cause threat to the safety of attendees and staff, both whilst on site and when travelling between sites and homes.

In the event of any such episode being forecast, action should be taken at the earliest possible convenience to limit disruption and preserve the safety of all concerned.

In the unlikely event of any unforeseen weather event such as **flash-flooding, electrical storms**, occurring whilst staff and attendees are on site, then evacuation procedures as noted in the **'Emergency Evacuation Procedures'** policy should be adhered to. All staff should be familiar with these procedures and they should be displayed on site for visitors to see.

Date created: 1st July 2019

Signature of Director or Company Secretary:



Name: Shevek Pring

Review date set: 1st July 2020

Reviewed by:

Amended / updated? yes / no

Brief explanation of changes:

Signature of Director or Company Secretary:

Name:

New Review date set:

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