

<b>Date of Issue</b>	February 2022
<b>Original Date of Issue</b>	October 12, 2014
<b>Subject</b>	<b>OUTDOOR BREAKS DURING EXTREME TEMPERATURES (COLD OR HOT)</b>
<b>References</b>	Environment and Climate Change Canada Canadian Pediatric Society Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit <a href="#">Policy 4245 – Emergency Response Procedures</a> <a href="http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/winter_safety">http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/winter_safety</a> <a href="#">Extreme temperature (simcoemuskokahealth.org)</a> <a href="https://ecalertme.weather.gc.ca/createaccount_en.php">https://ecalertme.weather.gc.ca/createaccount_en.php</a> <a href="http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org">www.simcoemuskokahealth.org</a> <a href="#">A Changing Climate Assessing health impacts and vulnerabilities due to climate change within Simcoe Muskoka</a> <a href="http://hc-sc.gc.ca">http://hc-sc.gc.ca</a>
<b>Contact</b>	School Services

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## 1. General

The purpose of this Administrative Procedures Memorandum (APM) is to assist in the development of protective strategies and key messaging, and to increase awareness regarding the ongoing and potential health impacts of extreme weather events associated with changes in climate (e.g. extreme temperatures).

Climate change has been identified as a public health issue. To mitigate potential health impacts associated with climate change, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) proactively communicates heat and cold warnings to the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) to ensure the health and safety of staff and students.

## 2. Guidelines

Exposure to extreme temperatures including extreme heat and extreme cold can cause serious or life-threatening health issues, such as difficulty breathing, heat stroke, frostbite and hypothermia.

When weather conditions have reached, or are nearing, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) warning criteria, principals should implement alternative schedules for outdoor breaks.

### 2.1 Extreme Heat Event

2.1.1 Health Canada reports that many regions in Canada may be facing extreme heat events of increasing intensity, duration and frequency due to current and future changes in climate. Warmer temperatures and extended heat waves may also result in an increase in air pollution and high levels of humidity for prolonged periods of time.

- 2.1.2 Children are at greater risk under conditions of extreme heat due to higher metabolic rates, a reduced capacity to sweat and their dependence on others to ensure they drink plenty of fluids.
- 2.1.3 In Ontario, ECCC issues a “Heat Warning” when two consecutive days of daytime maximum temperatures are expected to reach 31°C or more **and** nighttime minimum temperatures are expected to 20°C or more, **OR** two consecutive days of humidex values are expected to reach 40°C or more. When ECCC issues a warning, the SMDHU will notify our community partners and the public. In the event an ECCC “Heat Warning” persists for three or more days, the SMDHU will issue an “Extended Heat Warning.”
  - 2.1.3.1 Temperature is only one component of heat. Humidity, wind speed and radiant load (the amount of infrared energy heating a given area) can also impact the effect heat has on health. Heat-health risks depend greatly on exposure, sensitivity, acclimatization and adaptability to extreme heat.
- 2.1.4 The following are recommendations for outdoor play when conditions have reached, or are nearing, heat warning criteria:
  - 2.1.4.1 drink plenty of fluids (non-caffeinated);
  - 2.1.4.2 shorten outdoor breaks, encourage play or activities in shaded areas, and provide opportunities for students to come indoors to cool down;
  - 2.1.4.3 provide frequent water, drink and washroom breaks;
  - 2.1.4.4 reduce and/or reschedule physical activities such as team practices, sporting events and routine gym classes - keep physical activity to a minimum;
  - 2.1.4.5 wear loose-fitting, light coloured and lightweight clothing;
  - 2.1.4.6 relocate classes/activities to cool places such as air-conditioned areas of the school, ground floor rooms, or shady areas on the school grounds;
  - 2.1.4.7 consider field trips to shady parks, public libraries or air conditioned community facilities;
  - 2.1.4.8 close blinds/curtains to reduce radiant heat;
  - 2.1.4.9 provide and use portable or fixed fans to increase air circulation; and,
  - 2.1.4.10 wear hats, sunglasses and sunscreen.
- 2.2 Extreme Cold Event
  - 2.2.1 In Ontario, ECCC issues “Extreme Cold” warnings when the temperature or wind chill is expected to reach -30°C for at least two hours. Both the Canadian Paediatric Society and the SMDHU recommend minimum temperature limits for outdoor play. These organizations and the SCDSB recommend that **children be kept indoors if the temperature falls below -25°C, or if the wind chill is -27°C or greater** (Canadian Paediatric Society). Exposed skin will begin to freeze at -27°C.
  - 2.2.2 Principals are advised to use their professional judgment when implementing cold weather strategies when temperatures outside have reached, or are nearing, extreme cold warning criteria. These strategies may include:
    - 2.2.2.1 scheduling indoor recesses;
    - 2.2.2.2 shortening recess when temperatures fall between -15° to -27° (with or without windchill); and/or,

- 2.2.2.3 providing opportunities for students to come indoors to warm up.
- 2.2.3 The following are recommendations for outdoor play in conditions of cold weather:
  - 2.2.3.1 wear layers of loose fitting clothing;
  - 2.2.3.2 dress warmly and cover exposed skin;
  - 2.2.3.3 wear a hat and mittens;
  - 2.2.3.4 wear warm, waterproof boots;
  - 2.2.3.5 keep moving (make snow angels and build snow people), limit time sitting; and,
  - 2.2.3.6 remove wet clothing and boots immediately after play.
- 2.2.4 By implementing appropriate preparation measures for extreme cold and heat events, the health risks associated with extreme weather events can be minimized.
- 2.2.5 Weather warnings may be obtained directly by registering at [https://ecalertme.weather.gc.ca/createaccount\\_en.php](https://ecalertme.weather.gc.ca/createaccount_en.php).

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