

Air Quality

Background

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

Outdoor activities include but are not limited to outdoor physical education, extracurricular activities, field trips, and outdoor education activities. 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 is monitored utilizing Environment Canada's Air Quality Health Index (AQHI).

Just as outdoor activities may be cancelled or rescheduled due to lightning or other weather conditions, it is essential to take similar actions to protect participants of outdoor activities when the air quality is poor. Prairie South Schools will monitor the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) before outdoor activities. This will be done in collaboration between the Superintendent and school administration by checking the AQHI prior to the activity.

Procedures

1. When AQHI warnings are issued by Environment Canada, school administration, in consultation with the Superintendent of School Operations will make a determination of the air quality in the area where the outdoor activity will occur.
2. 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.
3. Outdoor activities such as physical education classes, outdoor field trips, and/or extracurricular activities which are longer in duration and intensity will adhere to the following guidelines:
 - **AQHI below 7** – activity will go ahead as per usual.
 - **AQHI of 7** – scheduled activities will go ahead with a warning to all participants advising caution or limited participation if there is a history of respiratory issues e.g. asthma or if they are experiencing breathing difficulties. It is recommended that teachers/coaches consider the reduction or modification of activity/practices.
 - **AQHI of 8 - 10+** – all outdoor activities, practices, and/or scheduled games/meets will be cancelled and/or postponed. Games/Meets will be reschedule, but in the event that cannot occur, they will be officially cancelled
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 in doors, have a plan for an early return.

Reference: [Understanding Air Quality Health Index Messages](#) (Government of Canada)
[Purple Air Real-Time Monitoring](#)