

## **Severe Weather Considerations**

Severe or hazardous weather is a safety concern for track and field competitions. Meet management personnel should monitor weather conditions and determine if conditions warrant suspending or cancelling activities. The following are not specific standards or requirements; rather they are considerations which may assist in the decision making process.

- Pre-meet planning may include the following (preferably with final procedures in writing):
  - Review of severe weather procedures for suspension or cancellation of activities and evacuation procedures, and policy for dealing with resumption/re-running/cancellation of a race halted in progress.
  - Designating a person to monitor threatening weather, and designating shelter(s) – buildings, parked vehicles, etc.
  - Source of weather forecasts ([www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov) is one), radar reports, and lightning detection.
  - Means of communicating weather information to the Referee.
  - Means of communicating severe weather warnings and evacuation orders from the Referee to athletes, coaches, officials, spectators, and staff.
  - Mitigation of severe weather conditions – liquids for hydration, shade, water removal equipment, etc.
- Prior to and during the competition, monitoring current and near-term forecasts and weather radar is helpful in assessing the threat of heavy rain, hail, strong winds, lightning, and the heat index.
- The final decision making authority is the Referee who may elect to continue, suspend, or cancel competition (a Games Committee may also be involved). Field event head judges can make recommendations to the Referee and may also temporarily suspend competition at their venue. Ensuring the safety of participants is the principal consideration.
  - Decisions to suspend may include an anticipated time for a further review (for example, 1/2, 1, or 2 hours – if possible) and a decision as is then appropriate to resume competition, continue the suspension, or cancel the competition.
  - After a suspension, field event competitions resume at the point of suspension recorded on the event sheet, with an appropriate warm-up period based on the length of the suspension.
  - Decisions to postpone or cancel end the competition for the day. Competition postponed to the next day is resumed at the point of suspension recorded on the event sheet. The direction of runways may be changed for weather conditions at the time, since it's a new day of competition.
  - A decision to delay the start of a longer race may more prudent than starting and then suspending it in mid-race. If suspended in mid-race, the Referee determines if and when a race will be re-started.
- Severe weather factors to consider:
  - **Lightning** conditions are addressed by [NCAA "Guideline 1d – Lightning Safety"](#) & NFHS Guidelines on Contests During Lightning Disturbances, and Referees should be aware of these. Both recommend suspension of competition when thunder or lightning is observed at the competition venue, and waiting 30 minutes after the last observation of either before resuming events. Use of lightning detection equipment is most useful.
  - **Rain** conditions prompt consideration of the condition of runways, pits, and throwing circles -- are there signs of: the plant foot slipping in the vertical & horizontal jumps; a loss of traction/slipping in the throwing circle or javelin that could cause the athlete to fall or lose control of the implement; or the athlete losing a grip on an implement or pole vaulting pole?
  - **Wind** considerations are addressed in NCAA Rule 6-1.18 regarding a Referee's decision on the direction of runways prior to the competition. USATF Rule 180.1 addresses extreme conditions. Severe winds may lead to decisions to continue or curtail competition for the safety of pole vaulters (landing in the vaulting box or off the pit). Long throws implements landing far outside sectors may also pose safety concerns.
  - **Excessive heat** may prompt consideration of rescheduling longer races to cooler times in the day, and how to provide athletes with shade and liquids (water & performance drinks with electrolytes) for hydration of both athletes & officials.