



# Soccer Maine Weather Policy

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide Soccer Maine referees as well soccer club officials and coaches with weather-related guidelines that will help ensure player safety, and also provide some predictability to all parties by clarifying the roles, responsibilities, and process for cancelling and re-scheduling matches due to severe weather.

## **SCOPE**

This document applies to all Soccer Maine sanctioned soccer matches.

There are two primary phases of a soccer match that require match officials and coaches to make decisions with respect to the weather:

- Pre-match: The time before the match begins, up until the start whistle is blown
- Match: The time after the start whistle is blown after the end whistle is blown and the field is fully cleared.

During both phases of the match, officials and coaches (and any other adults in a leadership position) – need to first and foremost make decisions with the players' and spectators safety in mind. Additionally, early communication is strongly encouraged to eliminate conflicts at match time that could have been avoided.

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Head Coaches – own the accountability for ensuring the safety of their players; for league matches owns the decision prior to a match to start or cancel the match.

Assistant Coaches and Trainers – help advise the Head Coach on field and weather conditions and provide opinions on player safety.

Head Referee – prior to a match starting provides input on field and weather conditions and opines on whether a match should start; after a match starts owns the decision to continue or cancel.

Field Owners – may close fields if weather has created unplayable conditions; must communicate closures ASAP.

## **PROCESS – PRE-MATCH**

### League Matches

League matches can require lengthy travel. If there is a reason to believe that severe weather may create a situation where unsafe conditions would prevent the game from being played, Head Coaches should be in early contact prior to teams starting their travel to provide information on weather at the game location.

The Home Head Coach should be in touch with the Field Owner well in advance of the match so that if the field is declared unplayable, the traveling team can be notified before traveling.



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If there is no restriction on the field, the Home Head Coach owns the decision to play or not to play based on severe weather as it relates to player safety.

While it is an inconvenience, there should be little to no weight placed on whether the opposing team has already arrived at the field. Player safety is the number one priority.

## Tournaments

Soccer Maine may conduct a Tournaments or league playoffs in a tournament format. Those Soccer Maine sponsored events will have a Tournament or League Director who owns the decision to play or not to play. Tournament participants should understand that matches may be played at different field complexes where conditions may vary, so some tournament matches may be played and others may be canceled. Tournaments run by clubs and sanctioned by Soccer Maine are responsible for their own weather policy and/or decisions on playable conditions.

## **PROCESS – MATCH**

In the event severe weather forces cancellation of a match after at least half of regulation time has been played, the match shall be considered official and the score at the point of cancellation shall be the final score. The decision on whether a match should be discontinued or will be recommenced if weather improves is made by the Referee. If a match must be stopped before halftime, the Referee will follow weather protocol, i.e. thunder/lightning protocol provides a 30 minute delay in which all players and coaches must leave the field before the game recommences. Such a match may be temporarily halted and recommenced, picking up where play stopped. Regardless of weather conditions, coaches and their teams **MUST** appear on the field of play ready to play as scheduled unless officially notified not to appear by the Referee. Failure to appear (unless notified) results in forfeiture of the match.. The Referee may postpone or cancel any match. If the decision is made to postpone or cancel, that decision is final.

## Thunder and Lightning

Lightning can strike up to 10 miles outside of a thunderstorm. The danger from lightning can persist for 20-30 minutes or more after a thunderstorm has passed. Referees are instructed to suspend a match when thunder and or lightning are present for a period of 30 minutes before resuming the match. If thunder or lightning occur again, the 30 minute period is restarted. If the head referee feels that the match is unlikely to be restarted, and the second half had not commenced, then the Referee has the ability to cancel the game. If the head referee feels that the match is unlikely to be restarted, and the second half had commenced, the Referee has the right to call the game completed.

Soccer Maine recommends that participants seek immediate shelter in their automobiles or a designated severe weather shelter, if there is one nearby. Smaller, open structures, tents, trees, isolated areas, etc, are not safe and should be avoided. Cars, with windows rolled up or buses can provide good shelter. Avoid contact with metal or other conducting materials to the outside surfaces. Do not stay in open, unprotected areas.



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## Hot Weather

1. Clubs should discuss and instruct their coaches on the heat index. This is available at [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov)

Coaches are encouraged to monitor the conditions. The following are recommended when there is a possibility of dangerous high heat index:

<u>Heat Index</u>	<u>Action</u>
Up to 84°	Normal Play
85° - 104°	Mandatory two-minute water breaks per half with running time.
105°+	Suspend Play

## Cold Weather

For fall and spring play, cold becomes a factor. Players should dress in appropriate clothing. Field conditions will be affected by freezing rain, sleet and snow. The ground may become frozen. Check weather radio frequently for temperature and weather conditions.

<u>Temperature</u>	<u>Action</u>
45° and lower	Allow additional clothing
32° and lower	Suspend matches

## **REVIEW CYCLE**

This document will be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.

## **REFERENCES**

FIFA Laws of the Game  
FIFA Stadium and Security Regulations  
NOAA Web Site