
S.O.P. #: 400-34

SUBJECT: WEATHER-DIRECTED TRAINING POLICY

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Objective: To provide guidance to field personnel when in-station or formalized training at the Fire-Rescue Academy may be affected by adverse weather conditions. This policy will provide guidance on which types of training will be impacted by various weather conditions and when certain outdoor activities should be cancelled or postponed.

Section 1: General Guidelines

- A. Training activities are vital to all functions of the department. Completion of such activities should not endanger members, increase risk of injury, or affect the overall mission of the Baltimore County Fire Department. Company commanders and Fire-Rescue Academy Instructors must use sound judgment when making decisions about weather conditions which may impact the safe completion of scheduled training.
- B. Forecasted weather conditions will be based upon the National Weather Service Forecast Office for the Baltimore/Washington Region. Conditions will be based upon the Point Forecast for the Fire-Rescue Academy (39.22°, -76.47°).
- C. The Director of the Fire-Rescue Academy, or their designee, shall review the weather forecast by 1900 hours to determine training conditions for the following day.
 - 1. Conditions are subject to change throughout the day. As such, they may be adjusted throughout the day and as necessary.
- D. Information about weather conditions shall be disseminated to the field in the following manner:
 - 1. Announcement via the Main Talkgroup at 0700 and 1700 hours for Black, and Blue Flag conditions. Additionally, conditions shall be announced if the conditions change to one of these statuses throughout the day.
 - 2. Via the Baltimore County Fire-Rescue Academy's website and/or official social media platform (Twitter, @BCoFD_FRA).
 - 3. Via e-mail communication, as appropriate.

Section 2: Applications Where Policy Shall Be Applied

- A. While company commanders are encouraged to utilize these guidelines during any training activity, the following training activities will be bound to this policy:
 - 1. Any scheduled training or testing facilitated by the Baltimore County Fire-Rescue Academy at any location.
 - 2. During weather conditions where the outside air temperature is less than 32°F and any departmental apparatus will be parked outside for more than fifteen (15) minutes. During these conditions, damage to pump gauges, freezing of the pump, and freezing of EMS medications may occur.

Section 3: Training Flag Conditions

- A. The purpose of training flag conditions is to provide a uniform application of various criteria to determine the training activities which are safe under various conditions. While these statuses are generally based upon the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT), the complexity of the variables involved makes it impractical to calculate for a forecasted condition. Therefore, the department shall use a combination of outside air temperature (OAT) and the heat index to determine these conditions. The Director of the Fire/Rescue Academy, or his/her designee, reserve the right to make adjustments to these criteria based upon their judgment.
- B. **Blue Flag.** Blue flag conditions are generally defined by an outside air temperature of between 15°F and 32°F. Training which will cause apparatus to be parked outside in excess of fifteen (15) minutes shall be cancelled unless they can be housed indoors. Training which involves the use of water shall be cancelled. Other outdoor training activities may continue with appropriate protective equipment to guard against the elements.
1. Utilize discretion in planning heavy outdoor exercise for personnel because the environment is colder than normal. Heavy outdoor exercise for personnel should be conducted with caution and under reasonable supervision. Use a “buddy system” and have teams monitor each other’s condition. Drink 1 quart of cool water per hour. Use 75% work and 25% rest for outdoor work (i.e. 45 minutes work and 15 minutes rest). Be alert for frostbite and hypothermia. Dehydration in cold weather environments may still occur.
- C. **Green Flag.** Green flag conditions are generally defined by an outside air temperature of 33°F or above, with a heat index at or below 84°F. All training activities may be conducted under normal guidelines without restriction.
1. Extremely intense physical exertion may precipitate heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Outdoor exercise for personnel may be conducted with limited supervision. The use of a “buddy system” is encouraged. Drink 1 quart of cool water per hour. Use 75% work and 25% rest for outdoor work (i.e. 45 minutes work and 15 minutes rest).
- D. **Yellow Flag.** Yellow flag conditions are generally defined by an outside air temperature of 33°F or above, with a heat index between 85°F and 94°F. All training activities may be conducted with caution.
1. Strenuous exercise and activity should be curtailed for new and unacclimated personnel. Heat stress may occur. Use a “buddy system” and have teams monitor each other’s condition. Drink 1-2 quarts of cool water per hour. Use 50% work and 50% rest for outdoor work (i.e. 30 minutes work and 30 minutes rest). Increased risk of heat cramps with heat exhaustion and/or stroke possible with continued exposure.
- E. **Red Flag.** Red flag conditions are generally defined by an outside air temperature of 33°F or above, with a heat index between 95°F and 99°F. Training conducted in the SCBA Maze or Flashover Simulator shall be cancelled. Other training may be conducted with extreme caution. Activities should be adjusted to accomplish those training objectives which are only operationally necessary. Personnel should be alert for symptoms of heat stress and ensure that all personnel are adequately hydrated.
1. Strenuous exercise must be curtailed for all personnel. Use a “buddy system” and have teams monitor each other’s condition. Drink 2 quarts of cool water per hour. Use 25% work and 75% rest for outdoor work (i.e. 15 minutes work and 45 minutes rest). Heat stroke possible with continued exposure.

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2. Additionally, irrespective of flag color, SCBA maze training will be cancelled whenever the temperature inside the maze reaches 100°F.

F. **Black Flag.** Black flag conditions indicate that all outdoor training activities are suspended/cancelled. The following criteria define when a Black Flag condition exists:

1. An outside air temperature of 14°F or below.
2. The snow emergency plan is in effect for Baltimore County.
3. Environmental conditions are such that it makes non-mission essential travel hazardous (i.e. icing, tropical-storm or hurricane conditions).
4. The heat index is 100°F or above.

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APPENDIX A – Flag Conditions

Flag Color	Weather Criteria	Actions Taken
BLUE	OAT 15°F - 32°F	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training which causes apparatus to be parked outside in excess of 15 minutes CANCELLED unless they can be housed indoors.• Training involving the use of water CANCELLED.• Other outdoor training may continue with appropriate PPE• 75% / 25% work/rest cycle.• Drink 1 quart cool water per hour.
GREEN	OAT > 33°F Heat Index < 84°F	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All training may be conducted without restriction.• 75% / 25% work/rest cycle.• Drink 1 quart cool water per hour.
YELLOW	OAT > 33°F Heat Index 85°F - 94°F	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All training may be conducted WITH CAUTION.• 50% / 50% work/rest cycle.• Drink 1-2 quarts cool water per hour.
RED	OAT > 33°F Heat Index 95°F - 99°F	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SCBA Maze Training CANCELLED.• Flashover Simulator Training CANCELLED.• Other training conducted with EXTREME CAUTION and only those objectives which are operationally necessary.• 25% / 75% work/rest cycle• Drink 2 quarts cool water per hour.
BLACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OAT ≤ 14°F• Heat Index ≥ 100°F• Snow Emergency Plan in Effect• Hazardous Travel Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All outdoor training activities SUSPENDED.