Jeff R. Degitz
Director
410-386-2103, Fax: 410-876-8284
TT: 410-848-9747
email: ccrec@ccg.carr.org

Department of Recreation and Parks
Carroll County Government
300 South Center Street
Westminster, Maryland 21157

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RECREATION AND PARKS POLICY STATEMENT #10-01

To: **RECREATION AND PARKS STAFF**

Subject: **SEVERE WEATHER POLICY**

1. Purpose

To establish a procedure to promote the safety of program participants during occurrences of severe weather

2. Background

The Department of Recreation & Parks previously initiated a policy regarding the removal of participants and spectators from athletic fields during occurrences of lighting. This updated policy will be expanded to include building closures during inclement weather and warnings for additional severe weather including excessive heat and high winds. This policy supersedes the former Lightning Policy #06-1.

3. Action

The following policy is hereby established regarding the occurrence of severe weather during Department of Recreation & Parks and recreation council activities:

A. THUNDER & LIGHTNING: Effectively immediately, once lightning is observed or thunder is heard during outdoor recreation council activities, all athletic fields must be cleared for a period of 20 minutes. If lightning is observed (or thunder heard) again, the 20 minute period of cleared fields starts over.

B. SNOW: When schools are closed or close early due to inclement weather, all recreation and parks activities for that day are cancelled. For weekend activities, if the snow emergency plan is in effect after 6 pm Friday or anytime Saturday, all Saturday activities are cancelled. If the snow emergency plan is in effect after 6 pm Saturday or anytime Sunday, all Sunday activities are cancelled. This includes activities that occur at school sites, nature centers, New Windsor Community Room, South Carroll Senior & Community Center and the Robert Moton Center. *In cases of extreme bad weather where additional time is necessary to provide safe access to schools or county facilities, it may become necessary to cancel activities until such time that safe access can be provided.*

C. WIND: When a high wind warning is issued by the National Weather Service (NWS), outdoor activities shall not operate within close proximity of trees, power lines and other potential hazards. The NWS defines a high wind warning as sustained wind speeds of 40 mph or greater lasting for 1 hour or longer or 58 mph or greater for any duration of time.

D. HEAT: Approximately 30 minutes prior to the start of the activity, temperature and heat index reading should be taken at the site or from www.weather.com or a comparable source. The following are recommended guidelines for coaches, program leaders and volunteers to follow with regards to Department sponsored *youth* activities:

Heat Index 80-89	Use caution; monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.
Heat Index 90-104	Use extreme caution; remove helmets and other equipment if not involved in contact.
Heat Index 105-129	Alter uniforms by removing items where feasible; practice time should be shortened with low intensity & limited conditioning.
Heat Index 130 & above	NO PRACTICE OR GAMES. ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE RESCHEDULED FOR EARLY/LATE IN DAY OR AN ALTERNATIVE DATE WHEN HEAT INDEX IS LOWER.

Some discretion is granted to the volunteers in making this decision as programs may be occurring at sites with abundant shade, water & frequent breezes.

In all cases, once the heat index rises above 105, programs should allow for frequent cooling breaks, reduced activity levels, appropriate uniform modifications, mandatory water breaks every 30 minutes (10 minutes in duration) and ice down towels to be available to players for cooling.

E. Enforcement of this policy will be delegated to the volunteer recreation councils when staff are not present at these activities

4. Effective Date

This policy statement is effective immediately and will remain in effect until canceled or superceded.

Jeff R. Degitz, Director
Department of Recreation & Parks