

# Inclement weather



The information on this page relates to a high-priority health and safety risk. The risk controls detailed below must be implemented and monitored in line with the [safety management procedure](#).

Find out how to minimise the risk of injury and illness from inclement weather during outdoor activities such as sports, events, travel, camps and excursions.

## Inclement weather conditions

Inclement weather includes:

- extreme temperatures
- heavy rain, hail and snow
- strong winds
- severe dust storm
- lightning or thunderstorm.

When planning outdoor activities it's important to identify the risk of injury and illness from inclement weather and put risk controls in place to ensure activities can be carried out safely. You should also prepare contingency plans in case you need to modify, postpone or cancel outdoor activities in the event of severe weather such as a storm or heatwave.

## Identifying risks from inclement weather

Monitor, or delegate someone to monitor, daily weather forecasts and identify any potential inclement weather risks.

For example:

- check [Bureau of Meteorology South Australian forecasts](#), or
- download a weather app to your mobile device.

Monitor for severe weather danger warnings in the lead up to the planned activity:

- [Bureau of Meteorology national warnings summary](#).

During periods of hot weather, check the heatwave forecast:

- [SES heatwave forecast](#)
- [Bureau of Meteorology heatwave service for Australia](#)

## During and following a period of inclement weather

### Look out for

- signs of an approaching storm such as dark sky, high winds, thunder and lightning
- hot weather followed by heavy rain or wind that can affect the stability of trees
- tree debris that might pose a slip or trip hazard, such as leaves, nuts and branches
- damaged tree limbs and branches that may fall
- wet floors and stairs
- employees or students having trouble breathing triggered by dust, thunderstorms or panic.

Refer to the [flood safety page](#) for information on what to do after a flooding event.

## Risk controls

### During hot weather

#### Arrange

- work or learning tasks to maximise time in the shade or, if possible, relocate indoors
- start, end and break times to maximise activity time in the cooler parts of the day
- drinking water supply to keep hydrated.

### Look out for

- signs and symptoms of heat-related illness
  - see SA Health guidance on [heat-related illness signs, symptoms and treatment](#)
  - download a copy of SA Health's [know the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke poster](#) and share it with first aiders and anyone responsible for supervising outdoor activities.

## Avoid

- Avoid sitting or standing under trees during prolonged hot weather as heat stress can cause branches and limbs to break
  - eucalypts are especially dangerous during hot weather as they will shed healthy branches or limbs to preserve water in the rest of the tree.

## Monitor

- the temperature of outdoor surfaces and play equipment before allowing children and young people access
  - anything left in direct sunlight can become hot enough to cause burn injuries – check before each use
  - where possible, move equipment under cover or into the shade when not in use.
- [South Australia Country Fire Service fire danger ratings](#), particularly at sites with bushfire risk ratings of R1 (extreme or very high risk) and R2 (high risk) or when planning excursions or travel outside the Adelaide metro area during bushfire season.

## During windy weather

### Arrange

- for loose objects in outdoor areas to be secured or put away
- for vehicles to be moved away from trees.

### Look out for

- tree debris such as bark, nuts, leaves and sticks that could present a trip or slip hazard
- loose objects that could become airborne and cause injuries
- approaching dust storms.

## Avoid

- sitting or standing under trees in strong winds that may cause branches to fall without warning
- exercise and outdoor activities during dust storms and when the wind is carrying bushfire smoke in your direction
- using evaporative air conditioners during dust storms or when the wind is carrying bushfire smoke in your direction because these draw in outside air.

## Monitor

- weather warnings on the [Bureau of Meteorology national warnings summary](#)
  - if strong wind warnings are issued, consider the risk to students, staff and visitors and assess the need to suspend or cancel outdoor activities
- the 'feels like' temperature stated in weather forecasts
  - a strong southerly wind can lead to significant wind chill, which may affect clothing and shelter requirements for outdoor activities
- air quality, particularly during and after a dust storm or bushfire
  - [smoke, dust and air quality ratings](#) are provided by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in South Australia.

## Additional precautions for sites in Port Pirie during windy weather

Site leaders in Port Pirie must also consider health risks from the spread of lead-contaminated dust in windy conditions.

### Monitor

- daily weather forecasts and observations, for example [Bureau of Meteorology Port Pirie Forecast](#)
  - if forecast or observed windspeeds are greater than 20km/h or if ambient temperatures are 35oC or higher, with wind speeds greater than 15km/h, refer to considerations below.

## Consider

- the health and safety risks to employees, children and young people before allowing them to undertake outdoor activities
- postponing planned outdoor activities, including grounds and facilities maintenance and repairs.

## Avoid

- using outdoor blower vacs, dry dusting and sweeping, all of which can cause the redistribution of lead-contaminated dust and entry of dust indoors
- drying children's clothing on outdoor clothes lines
- eating outdoors.

## Arrange

During windy weather:

- close all doors and windows to minimise entry of lead-contaminated dust from outside
- look out for increased dust on indoor furniture and equipment
- damp dust throughout the day – do not dry dust.

Following a period of windy weather:

- damp dust indoor furniture and equipment
- wet clean outdoor furniture and equipment
- hose down all veranda porches, doorsteps, entryways, paths and driveways.

Implement the [lead smart guidelines for educational, child care and day care providers](#).

Contact the [Port Pirie Environmental Health Centre](#) for more information and education relating to lead exposure pathways and strategies to minimise risk.

# Suspending or cancelling outdoor activities

Follow advice in [severe weather warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology](#) when deciding whether to suspend or cancel outdoor activities. If a current warning advises taking shelter and remaining indoors you should suspend outdoor activities until the warning has been cancelled.

If the SES issues an [extreme heatwave warning](#) for the district where an outdoor activity is planned to take place, cancel the activity or postpone until the heatwave has passed. Where a severe heatwave warning is issued, consider the need to modify, postpone or cancel the activity.

If the [EPA air quality rating](#) is 'extremely poor', suspend outdoor activities until the warning has been cancelled. If the air quality rating is 'poor' or 'very poor', consider the need to modify, postpone or cancel the activity.

During a thunderstorm you can use the 30-30 rule to help you decide what to do:

- when you see lightning flash, count the time until you hear thunder
- if it's 30 seconds or less, suspend outdoor activities and seek shelter in a fully enclosed structure with 4 walls and a roof
  - avoid sheltering under trees or in open structures such as picnic shelters, gazebos or verandahs
- once activities have been suspended, wait 30 minutes or more after the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder before resuming the activity or returning outdoors.

## Emergency closure of schools and preschools

Refer to the [emergency management policy](#) and [emergency management procedure \(PDF 362 KB\)](#) for guidance on school and preschool closures during severe storms and other major weather events.

## Standards and procedures

[Outdoor learning environment standard \(PDF 969 KB\)](#)

[Safety management procedure](#)

[Camps and excursions procedure \(PDF 446 KB\)](#)

## Contact

### Work Health and Safety

Phone: 8226 1440

Email: [Education.WHS@sa.gov.au](mailto:Education.WHS@sa.gov.au)

## Related information

- [Creating a safe outdoor learning environment](#)
- [Camps and excursions](#)
- [Selecting and maintaining trees](#)
- [First aid in schools and preschools](#)

## Other websites

- [TLAP - Targeted Lead Abatement Program](#)
- [Port Pirie Lead Implementation Program | SA Health](#)
- [Dust storms | SA Health](#)
- [Bushfire smoke and your health | SA Health](#)