

Sonoma Charter School Extreme Heat Policy Policy #40

BP/AR

Purpose

The Governing Board recognizes its responsibility to provide a safe and healthy learning and working environment for all students, staff, and visitors during periods of extreme weather or hazardous environmental conditions. The Board authorizes the Superintendent or designee to implement appropriate safety measures, modify school operations, or close schools when conditions threaten the health, safety, or welfare of students or employees.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, "extreme weather" or "hazardous environmental conditions" may include, but are not limited to:

- Excessive heat
 - Poor air quality or wildfire smoke
 - Severe storms
 - Flooding
 - High winds
 - Power outages related to weather
 - Hazardous road conditions
 - Excessive cold
 - Environmental emergencies or natural disasters impacting school operations
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Sonoma Charter School
 Extreme Heat Policy
 Policy #40

CDPH Heat Risk Grid: Understanding “HeatRisk” Level, Who is At Risk, and What Actions to Take
 Revised July 27, 2023. Adapted from the [National Weather Service \(NWS\) HeatRisk tool](#). Learn more about how to stay safe during extreme heat at [CDPH Extreme Heat](#).

Value	Risk	What does this mean?	Who / What is at risk?	What actions can be taken?
0 (Green)	Little to None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This level of heat poses little to no risk from expected heat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No elevated risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No preventative actions necessary
1 (Yellow)	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heat of this type is tolerated by most; however, there is a minor risk for extremely heat-sensitive groups* to experience negative heat-related health effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily those who are extremely sensitive to heat,* especially when outdoors without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase hydration Reduce time spent outdoors or stay in the shade when the sun is strongest Open windows at night and use fans
2 (Orange)	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heat of this type is tolerated by many; however, there is a moderate risk for members of heat-sensitive groups* to experience negative heat-related health effects, including heat illness Some risk for the general population who are exposed to the sun for longer periods of time Living spaces without air conditioning can become uncomfortable during the afternoon and evening, but fans and leaving windows open at night will help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily heat-sensitive or heat-vulnerable groups,* especially those without effective cooling or hydration Those not acclimatized to this level of heat (i.e., visitors) Otherwise healthy individuals exposed to longer duration heat, without effective cooling or hydration, such as in the sun at an outdoor venue Some transportation and utilities sectors Some health systems will see increased demand, with increases in emergency room visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce time in the sun during the warmest part of the day Stay hydrated Stay in a cool place during the heat of the day (usually 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) Move outdoor activities to cooler times of the day For those without air conditioning, use fans to keep air moving and open windows at night to bring cooler air inside buildings
3 (Red)	Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heat of this type represents a major risk to all individuals who are 1) exposed to the sun and active or 2) are in a heat-sensitive group Dangerous to anyone without proper hydration or adequate cooling Living spaces without air conditioning can become deadly during the afternoon and evening. Fans and open windows will not be as effective. Poor air quality is possible Power interruptions may occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of the population, especially anyone without effective cooling or hydration Those exposed to the heat/sun at outdoor venues Health systems likely to see increased demand with significant increases in emergency room visits Most transportation and utilities sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cancel outdoor activities during the heat of the day** (usually 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.), and move activities to the coolest parts of the day Stay hydrated Stay in a cool place especially during the heat of the day and evening If you have access to air conditioning, use it, or find a location that does. Even a few hours in a cool location can lower risk. Fans may not be adequate.
4 (Magenta)	Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a rare level of heat leading to an extreme risk for the entire population Very dangerous to anyone without proper hydration or adequate cooling This is a multi-day excessive heat event. A prolonged period of heat is dangerous for everyone not prepared Poor air quality is likely Power outages are increasingly likely as electrical demands may reach critical levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entire population exposed to the heat is at risk For people without effective cooling, especially heat-sensitive groups, this level of heat can be deadly Health systems highly likely to see increased demand with significant increases in emergency room visits Most transportation and utilities sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cancel outdoor activities** Stay hydrated Stay in a cool place, including overnight If you have access to air conditioning, use it, or find a location that does. Even a few hours in a cool location can lower risk. Fans will not be adequate. Check on your neighbors

*Populations at higher risk of heat-related health impacts include older adults, young children, unhoused residents, those with chronic health conditions, outdoor workers, those exercising or doing strenuous activities outdoors during the heat of the day, pregnant individuals, those living in low-income communities, and more.
 ** For Extreme (Magenta/4) and Major (Red/3) risk levels, CDPH recommends more caution and therefore guides canceling outdoor activities based on these scenarios.

Authority

The Superintendent or designee shall monitor weather forecasts, air quality reports, emergency notifications, and local/state agency guidance to determine whether modifications to school operations are necessary.

https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/Extreme%20Heat%20Pages/BI_Natural-Disasters_Extreme-Heat.aspx

The Superintendent or designee may:

- Modify outdoor activities
- Adjust school schedules
- Relocate students or staff indoors
- Implement heat or smoke mitigation protocols
- Transition to emergency remote instruction if authorized by law and district capability

Sonoma Charter School

Extreme Heat Policy

Policy #40

The Superintendent or designee shall coordinate with local emergency services and public health agencies as appropriate.

Heat Safety Procedures

When high temperatures are forecasted or observed, the district shall take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of heat-related illness. Such measures may include:

- Encouraging hydration and providing access to water
- Limiting strenuous outdoor activity
- Modifying recess, physical education, athletics, and outdoor events
- Providing access to shaded or air-conditioned spaces
- Monitoring students and staff for signs of heat-related illness

The Superintendent or designee may establish administrative regulations identifying temperature thresholds and operational responses.

Air Quality and Wildfire Smoke

The district shall monitor local air quality conditions using recognized public health resources, including the Air Quality Index (AQI).

When air quality reaches unhealthy levels, the district may:

- Refer to Purple Air Map for guidance:
<https://map.purpleair.com/air-quality-standards-us-epa-aqi?select=214859&opt=%2F1%2Ffp%2Fa10%2Fp604800%2Fc0#1/25/-30>
- Restrict or cancel outdoor activities
- Keep students indoors
- Utilize air filtration systems where available
- Modify school schedules or operations
- Close schools when indoor environments cannot be maintained safely

Special consideration shall be given to students and staff with respiratory or other health conditions.

Severe Weather and Environmental Emergencies

Sonoma Charter School

Extreme Heat Policy

Policy #40

The district shall maintain emergency preparedness procedures addressing severe weather and environmental hazards, including communication protocols, evacuation procedures, shelter-in-place procedures, and continuity of operations.

School closures or schedule modifications may occur when conditions pose significant risk, including but not limited to:

- Unsafe travel conditions
- Widespread power outages
- Flooding or storm damage
- Hazardous air quality
- Emergency orders from governmental agencies

Communication

The district shall make reasonable efforts to notify families, staff, and community members as soon as practicable regarding operational changes related to extreme weather or environmental conditions.

Notifications may include:

- Phone calls
- Text messages
- Email notifications
- School website postings
- Social media announcements

Communications shall include, when possible:

- The reason for operational changes
- Expected duration
- Safety guidance
- Information regarding childcare, meals, or instructional continuity as applicable

Employee Safety

The district shall comply with all applicable California occupational safety requirements related to heat illness prevention, air quality, and workplace safety.

Employees shall receive appropriate guidance regarding health and safety procedures during hazardous environmental conditions.

Sonoma Charter School Extreme Heat Policy Policy #40

Administrative Regulations

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and maintain administrative regulations necessary to implement this policy, including operational thresholds, emergency response procedures, and communication protocols.

Legal References

- California Education Code
- California Code of Regulations
- California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) regulations
- California Emergency Services Act
- Guidance from the California Department of Education (CDE) and local public health agencies
- <https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/>