



ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY

This policy focuses on the impact that adverse and extreme weather may have upon sessions and what action to take should there be doubt or concern regarding the safety of running a session. All information gathered to inform decisions made should be sourced from the MET Office in collaboration with the staff knowledge of the site(s) in question

High Wind

High winds can pose risks to forest school sessions and activities in a number of ways; primarily due to the nature of our being situated within woodland beneath trees that can be affected by wind-speed/force.














A number of factors should be considered when assessing the potential risk of forecasted or observed winds: topography; the variety, age and species of trees; soil type; infrastructure; onsite facilities; (all of which have been considered in the following information).

When assessing wind-speed forecasts, the leading member of staff for a given session should rely upon forecasts given by the MET Office. Other forecasters can be used to gain an idea of the spectrum of forecasted wind, but ultimately the MET Office forecast should determine any action that need be taken.

MET office forecasts are issued in MPH (miles per hour). The MET office will forecast an hourly average wind-speed as well as the highest gust in any given hour. Details can be found at www.metoffice.gov.uk. These should be used in conjunction with the Beaufort scale to achieve insight into expected conditions in the woodland. The Beaufort scale is as follows;

<https://www.science-sparks.com/what-is-the-beaufort-scale/> (accessed 12/03/2023)

BEAUFORT WIND SCALE

| Beaufort Number | Description | Wind speed | Wave height | Sea conditions | Land conditions | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| 0 | Calm | < 1 knot < 1 mph < 2 km/h | 0 ft 0 m | Sea like a mirror | Smoke rises vertically |  |
| 1 | Light air | 1–3 knots 1–3 mph 2–5 km/h | 0–1 ft 0–0.3 m | Ripples | Direction shown by smoke drift |  |
| 2 | Light breeze | 4–6 knots 4–7 mph 6–11 km/h | 1–2 ft 0.3–0.6 m | Small wavelets | Wind felt on face |  |
| 3 | Gentle breeze | 7–10 knots 8–12 mph 12–19 km/h | 2–4 ft 0.6–1.2 m | Large wavelets | Leaves and small twigs in constant motion |  |
| 4 | Moderate breeze | 11–16 knots 13–18 mph 20–28 km/h | 3.5–6 ft 1–2 m | Small waves | Raises dust and loose paper |  |
| 5 | Fresh breeze | 17–21 knots 19–24 mph 29–38 km/h | 6–10 ft 2–3 m | Moderate waves | Small trees and leaves begin to sway |  |
| 6 | Strong breeze | 22–27 knots 25–31 mph 39–49 km/h | 9–13 ft 3–4 m | Large waves | Large branches in motion |  |
| 7 | High wind, moderate gale, near gale | 28–33 knots 32–38 mph 50–61 km/h | 13–19 ft 4–5.5 m | Sea heaps up | Whole trees in motion |  |
| 8 | Gale, fresh gale | 34–40 knots 39–46 mph 62–74 km/h | 18–25 ft 5.5–7.5 m | Moderately high waves | Twigs break off trees |  |
| 9 | Strong/severe gale | 41–47 knots 47–54 mph 75–88 km/h | 23–32 ft 7–10 m | High waves | Slight structural damage |  |
| 10 | Storm, whole gale | 48–55 knots 55–63 mph 89–102 km/h | 29–41 ft 9–12.5 m | Very high waves | Trees uprooted, considerable structural damage |  |
| 11 | Violent storm | 56–63 knots 64–72 mph 103–117 km/h | 37–52 ft 11.5–16 m | Exceptionally high waves | Widespread damage |  |
| 12 | Hurricane force | ≥ 64 knots ≥ 73 mph ≥ 128 km/h | ≥ 46 ft ≥ 14 m | Exceptionally high waves, sea is completely white | Devastation |  |

When to cancel sessions

The following table is an example of individual site characteristics and make up and dictates when a session should be cancelled as a result of actual/forecasted wind speed. These sites refer to the typical and regular sites that Journeys, Leaves and Seeds C.I.C operate sessions from.

| Wind including Gusts. | <31 mph (force 6) | 32-39mph (force 7/8) | 40-46mph (force 8) | >46mph (force 9) |
|--|----------------------------|---|--|---------------------|
| Bowring Park Golf Course | Fine to run with no issue. | CANCEL | CANCEL | CANCEL |
| Swanside Community Centre | Fine to run with no issue. | Fine to run, though consider impact of higher gusts on shelters and fire. Be extra aware as winds approach force 8. | CANCEL. | CANCEL. |
| Growing Sudley C.I.C (Sudley Walled Gardens) | Fine to run with no issue. | Fine to run, though consider impact of higher gusts on shelters and fire. | Cancellation should be considered. Seek advice of manager. | CANCEL |
| Ext.school sites. | Fine to run with no issue. | Fine to run, though consider impact of higher gusts on shelters and fire. | Cancellation should be considered. Seek advice of manager. | CANCEL. |

Temperature, Snow & Ice

A combination of low temperatures, snow and ice can lead to dangerous conditions for forest schools.

As forest school leaders we need to take into account the safety of our all service users not only during the sessions, but also as they travel to and from our sites.

Heavy snow will cause the roads to become dangerous almost instantly, as well as the risk of people not being able to get their cars out of the car park and therefore be stuck.

Very low temperatures during sessions can also pose a risk, especially to the children, and should be factored in. The correct clothing worn during a short 2-hour session may be fine when the temperatures drop, but if you are running a long 6 hour session and do not have adequate inside space then this could be dangerous.

Weather Warnings and What They Mean

(Please follow the MET Office for your decision making)

YELLOW: Severe weather is possible over the next few days and could affect you. Yellow means that you should plan ahead thinking about possible travel delays, or the disruption of your day-to-day activities. The Met Office is monitoring the developing weather situation and yellow means keep an eye on the latest forecast and be aware that the weather may change or worsen, leading to disruption of your plans in the next few days.

AMBER: There is an increased likelihood of bad weather affecting you, which could potentially disrupt your plans and possibly cause travel delays, road and rail closures, interruption to power and the potential risk to life and property. Amber means you need to be prepared to change your plans and protect you, your family and community from the impacts of the severe weather based on the forecast from the Met Office

RED: Extreme weather is expected. Red means you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the weather. Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life is likely. You must avoid dangerous areas and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.

Further information can be found at
www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/warnings

When To Cancel a Session

- Heavy snow (enough to settle on the roads) during a session that may make the roads dangerous or inhibit the customers being able to leave the car park
- Heavy snow the day before a session where the temperature does not go above freezing during the night, causing the roads to freeze (extra precaution taken for more remote forest school sites)
- Temperatures are below freezing, with a wind chill factor around the -5 to -10 range could be a cause for cancellation depending on the age of your children and any inside space you can utilise
- Any amber warnings issued for the days around your session
- Any red warnings issued for the days around your session

Electrical Storms, Flooding & other extreme weather conditions

The most likely weather conditions to cause disruption to sessions have been noted above, though other conditions may also cause threat to the safety of attendees and staff, both whilst on site and when travelling between sites and homes.

In the event of any such episode being forecast, action should be taken at the earliest possible convenience to limit disruption and preserve the safety of all concerned.