

COLD WEATHER GUIDELINES

Time spent outdoors is an integral part of the school day. Children need fresh air and exercise and time spent outside affords students an opportunity to break free from the structure of the classroom. However, there are times when it is not safe for children to be outdoors. These guidelines have been prepared by Karen Boffa, Principal, Plummer-Motz School, John Flaherty, Principal, Lunt School, Susan Raatikainen RN, Risa Garland RN and Jeanne Grindlinger RN.

When properly clothed, elementary school-aged children can participate in safe, vigorous play in an outdoor environment in most weather conditions. Increased caution is necessary during temperatures less than 20 degrees F. Children have a greater body surface area to weight ratio than adults and 50% of heat loss may occur from head and hands. Hypothermia results when the rate of the body's heat loss is greater than the rate of producing heat. Temperature plus wind velocity, or *wind chill*, is a prominent factor in determining cold weather safety. As the speed of the wind increases, it carries heat away from the body more quickly. The younger the child the less physical adaptive reactions they have to cold stress.

Therefore, when the outdoor temperature is zero degrees F or higher and the wind chill factor is zero degrees F or higher five minutes before scheduled recess, as reported for Falmouth, Maine on www.Weather.com, children will be allowed to play outdoors with adult supervision for an appropriate length of time if adequately dressed with warm clothing, jackets, pants, hats, mittens/gloves, and boots.

Sources:

National Weather Service, www.nws.noaa.gov/om/windchill/

University of New Hampshire, Child Study and Development Center

Graves, MD, Nancy Slater, MD, 1995, revised in 2004, Indiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

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Medline Plus, www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000057.htm

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Protecting Children from Extreme Weather, 102 CMR 8.11(2)(f.g.) & 8.12(1) The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, department of Early Education and Care, 7/01/05

Winter Safety Tips, American Academy of Pediatrics, 11/07

Child Care Weather Watch, Iowa Department of Public Health, Healthy Child Care Iowa

Healthy Kids, Healthy Care: Playground Safety, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>

Health Guidelines, Wonders Child Care Center, Chevy Chase, MD

Severe Cold Weather, School Health-Severe Weather #2, Community Health Services Department, County of Lambton, Point Edward, Ontario, www.lambtonhealth.on.ca