



SDHSAA Air Quality Guidance

To assist schools in making decisions regarding practice or competition impacted by air quality issues, and for use in SDHSAA led post-season contests impacted by air quality issues, the SDHSAA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) recommends using the NCAA's air quality guidelines and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's air quality guidelines for schools as the reference standards for the SDHSAA's air quality guidance.

The National Weather Service's (NWS) Air Quality Forecast System uses a component known as the Air Quality Index (AQI), which accounts for ground level ozone, particle pollution/particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide. The AQI presents a single number ranging from 0-500, with higher numbers indicating lower air quality.

The NWS issues air quality alerts based on monitoring stations around the country. AQI levels and NWS alerts can be found at <https://www.airnow.gov>. Member schools should check AQI readings from the closest reporting station to gauge local air quality and base decisions about outdoor activities on the following guidance:

- At AQI levels of **100-150**, all students should be monitored for respiratory difficulty, and sensitive students should be monitored closely or considered for removal from activity.
- At AQI levels of **150-200**, outdoor activities should be shortened if possible. For longer activities such as practice or competition, all athletes should be monitored for respiratory symptoms and sensitive students should follow their medical plans and considered for removal from activity.
- At AQI levels of **200-300**, schools should consider postponement or cancellation of outdoor activities. Sensitive individuals should avoid all outdoor activity.
- At AQI levels of **300 or above**, outdoor activities should be cancelled and/or moved indoors.

Students with preexisting pulmonary or cardiac conditions, such as asthma, should be managed accordingly with guidance from the student's family and healthcare team.

All schools should have emergency plans which include responses to respiratory issues in students.

References:

1. NCAA Sports Science Institute. NCAA Air Quality Guidance. 2018. <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2017/9/14/air-quality.aspx> Accessed August 16, 2023.
2. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools. 2023. <https://www.airnow.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/school-outdoor%20activity%20guidance.pdf> Accessed August 16, 2023.
3. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Air Quality Index (AQI) Basics. 2023. <https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics/> Accessed August 16, 2023.

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