



## LOUDOUN SOCCER WEATHER POLICY

Soccer is an outdoor sport, which means it may be played in nearly all weather conditions.

However, events (games, practices, tournaments) may be canceled due to inclement weather and/or unplayable field conditions. Weather conditions and field conditions, while often directly related, are separate factors when considering if an event is to occur as scheduled.

Below are details as to how these decisions are made and communicated, as well as protocols for inclement weather experienced on-site.

### COMMUNICATION OF CLOSURE AND CANCELATIONS

Loudoun Soccer has three primary notification channels of last-minute field closures:

1. **Email notifications:** An email from Loudoun Soccer will be sent to email addresses associated with your Sports Connect user account.
2. **Text notifications:** Text alerts will be sent to the primary cell phone number associated with your user account. Please read the Weather Alert Registration Guide to ensure you have opted into this service, and you have the correct cell phone number listed.
3. **Social Media:** Live updates regarding weather conditions and field/facility closures will be posted on Facebook ([facebook.com/LoudounSoccer](https://facebook.com/LoudounSoccer)) and Twitter ([@loudounsc](https://twitter.com/@loudounsc)). Be sure to follow us on one or both platforms and turn on notifications to receive updates.

Additionally, field status updates are often made on the [Field Status & Closures](#) page of LoudounSoccer.com.

Due to numbers variables (the size of the county, last-minute changes in weather patterns, unreliable or inconsistent weather forecasts), Loudoun Soccer rarely cancels programs due to inclement weather.

### FIELD CONDITIONS

The majority of the fields used by Loudoun Soccer are allocated to the club by Loudoun County Parks, Recreation, & Community Services (PRCS). PRCS has ultimate authority as to whether their grass fields are open for play. Loudoun Soccer may also close fields at their discretion but may not open fields that PRCS closes.

Decisions on field closures are made as late as possible in order to improve chances that the activity will be played. In obvious circumstances, fields may be closed prior to the game or practice day and communicated accordingly. For weekend events, field notifications are typically sent by 7:30AM. For weeknights, 3:30PM. Note that field conditions may change during the day, and additional alerts are communicated accordingly.

However, in many circumstances some fields may be open for play while others are closed (even at the same time), as each field may handle rain differently.

Decisions made by PRCS are communicated to Loudoun Soccer, who in turn notifies its membership of this status.

If no communication related to your field occurs, consider it open for play and your activity should occur as scheduled. In this case, it's considered a game-time or practice-time decision, and the decision resides on the authority of that event.

For Rec and Travel games: In the absence of a club official, the referee determines if the field is playable. In the absence of a referee, the coaches decide. Coaches cannot preemptively cancel a match.

For Minis and Micros sessions: In the absence of a club official, the lead trainer determines whether to play.

## **PROGRAM-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE**

### **Minis/Micros**

Minis and Micros sessions may be conducted in drizzle, light rain, cold, light snow, wind, or other less than ideal conditions. Site Coordinators/Lead Trainers may delay sessions a few minutes or stop the sessions to allow conditions to change and resume sessions as soon as possible – so please be prepared to come back onto the fields.

Site Coordinators/Lead Trainers will make the decisions on game day concerning field play and closures upon communication with the Director. Team coaches do NOT decide if their sessions are canceled. Only sessions that have been canceled by the Site Coordinator or Director may be made up.

### **Rec Program (Grades 1-12: Rec 1, Rec 2, Challenge 1, Challenge 2, Classic, and HS 7v7)**

The referee is the game-time decision-maker regarding to weather conditions. In the absence of a referee, the coaches determine if a game should be played.

For practices, coaches have the authority to determine if they should occur, and should exercise good judgment (training in light rain as long as the fields are open is OK; downpours in cold weather may be unsafe).

A club representative, if present, may supersede the authority of a referee or coach in terms of suspending or canceling a soccer activity.

### **ECNL, Travel, and Other Out-of-Club Programming**

Teams are encouraged to provide opponents with the Field Status & Closures page, but should always follow up with a call to be sure that the opponent is aware the field closure.

Furthermore, the travel team should send an email and ask for confirmation of receipt that the game has been postponed due to field closure.

### **LIGHTNING AND THUNDER POLICY**

This policy is in effect for ALL programs, practices, and games, as well as all other Loudoun Soccer-related outdoor activities.

At the first sound of thunder or the first sign of lightning, all coaches, players, referees, and spectators are to withdraw from the field and seek proper shelter (in a building or a vehicle). In the case of Travel games, Loudoun Soccer members should make our visitors aware of the policy and instruct them to seek proper shelter.

No place outside is safe near thunderstorms. The best shelter is a large, fully-enclosed, substantially constructed building. A vehicle with a solid metal roof and metal sides is a reasonable second choice.

**30-minute Rule** – Wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or the last lightning flash before giving the “all clear” signal and resuming normal activity. If thunder is heard or lightning is seen again with that 30-minute delay, the clock resets to zero and an additional delay of 30 minutes occurs.

Any new activities that follow shall have to repeat this same policy before starting.

Lightning research has confirmed that consecutive lightning strikes can occur as much as six miles apart. People often do not perceive lightning to be close if it is two miles or more away, but the risk of the next strike being at your location may actually be very high.

Many lightning casualties occur in the beginning as a thunderstorm approaches because people ignore these precursors. When thunderstorms are in the area but not overhead, the lightning threat can exist even if it is sunny at your location.

No lightning/thunder safety policy can give guaranteed safety, but these steps will help try to avoid serious injury by taking evasive action.

## **HIGH WINDS**

**High Wind Policy:** Loudoun Soccer will use the National Weather Service guidelines.

**High Wind Advisory:** Fields are open but subject to closure – Loudoun Soccer activities will be allowed, however specific sites may be closed and a decision to close all facilities may be made late or when practices and games are occurring.

Sustained winds of 25 to 39 MPH and/or gusts up to 57 MPH. Issuance is normally site specific.

**High Wind Warning:** All activities canceled.

This product is issued by the National Weather Service when high wind speeds may pose a hazard or is life threatening. The criteria for this warning varies from state to state.

## **NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE GUIDELINES**

As we're all aware, the weather is exceptionally difficult to predict at times and as such Loudoun Soccer will use the National Weather Service as its guide.

Ordinarily when a "Watch" is issued, practices and game may be canceled. In the event a "Warning" is issued, some activities may be canceled, including meetings and indoor training. Travel and road conditions are factors when the club makes a decision on cancelations.

The National Weather Service has developed a multi-tier concept for forecasting or alerting the public to all types of hazardous weather:

**Outlook** – A Hazardous Weather Outlook is issued daily addressing potentially hazardous weather or hydrologic events that may occur in the next seven days. The outlook will include information about potential severe thunderstorms, heavy rain or flooding, winter weather, extremes of heat or cold, etc. It is intended to provide information to those who need considerable lead time to prepare for the event. Other outlooks are issued on an event-driven basis, such as the Flood Potential Outlook and Severe Weather Outlook.

**Watch** – A watch is used when the risk of a hazardous weather or hydrologic event has increased significantly but its occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain. It is intended to provide enough lead time so those who need to set their plans in motion can do so. A watch means that hazardous weather is possible, but not imminent. People should have a plan of action in case a storm threatens and they should listen for later information and possible warning especially when planning travel or outdoor activities.

Warning – A warning is issued when a hazardous weather or hydrologic event is occurring, imminent, or likely. A warning means weather conditions pose a threat to life or property. People in the path of the storm need to take protective action.

Advisory – An advisory is issued when a hazardous weather or hydrologic event is occurring, imminent or likely. Advisories are for less serious conditions than warnings, but can cause significant inconvenience and if caution is not exercised, could lead to situations that may threaten life or property.

Special Weather Statement – A special weather statement is issued when something rare or unusual is occurring. These are usually triggered by sudden changes in meteorological conditions. The statements are to be taken as warnings for residents of a specific area. The warning generally states that an area might be at risk for a slight weather danger. Not all weather statements are warnings, though. Other times, statements describe informative facts about a weather system, such as local snowfall.