SEH-23
Rev 07/02

# COLD WEATHER SAFETY

## Safety & Security Fact Sheet

Cold weather injuries such as hypothermia and frostbite can be prevented by following a few simple precautions.

- **HOW COLD IS TOO COLD TO ALLOW STUDENTS TO PLAY OUTDOORS?**
  Common sense requires us to look beyond a number and consider factors such as wind chill, whether the ground is frozen or the sun is shining, how well the children are prepared to play outdoors, what activity the children are participating in, and the length of time to be spent outside. Deciding when students may play outdoors remains the responsibility of the principal, based on his or her professional judgment after considering the information provided in this fact sheet.
- **WHAT IS WIND CHILL?**
  Wind chill is the human perception of temperature created by the combination of the actual temperature and the additional heat loss from exposed skin caused by the wind. This is how cold it "feels" outside (the apparent temperature). The higher the wind speed and the lower the temperature, the greater the wind chill effect. Wind chill does not affect inanimate objects, nor does it affect humans who are sheltered from the wind. If the actual air temperature is 40°F and the wind speed is 10 miles per hour (mph), the apparent temperature is 28°F; at 32°F with a 10-mph wind speed, the apparent temperature is 21°F. Go to http://www.weatherpost.com/longterm/calculator.htm for an online wind chill calculator.
- **WHEN IS IT TOO WINDY TO SEND STUDENTS OUTDOORS?**
  Again, common sense and professional judgment provide the answer to this question. Keep in mind that the wind speed on your playground will depend on the natural shelter created by topography, trees, and other barriers that may deflect the wind. Do not rely on forecasted wind speeds. Refer instead to the wind force scale below to estimate local wind speed. The effect that increasing wind speed has on wind chill must also be considered. It is recommended that when sustained wind speed is in the moderate range, smaller students be kept indoors.
- **HOW DO I KNOW WHAT THE WIND SPEED IS?**
  The following terms used by the National Weather Service are based on the Beaufort (Wind Force) Scale:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Calm | Calm; smoke rises vertically. | (0-1 mph) |
| Light Air | Direction of wind shown by smoke drift, but not by wind vanes. | (1-3 mph) |
| Light Breeze | Wind felt on face; leaves rustle; ordinary vane moved by wind. | (4-7 mph) |
| Gentle Breeze | Leaves and twigs in constant motion; wind extends light flag. | (8-12 mph) |
| Moderate Breeze | Raises dust (consider the eye hazard) and loose paper; small branches are moved. | (13-18 mph) |
| Fresh Breeze | Small trees in leaf begin to sway; wavelets form on puddles. | (19-24 mph) |
| Strong Breeze | Large branches in motion; whistling in power lines; umbrellas useless. | (25-31 mph) |

- **HOW DO I GET DETAILED INFORMATION ON CURRENT LOCAL WEATHER CONDITIONS?**
  The best source of local weather information is a weather radio. Regional information is available from radio and television broadcasts. Current weather information is also available from WeatherNet4 (http://www.nbc4.com ), the National Weather Service (www.nws.noaa.gov/) and the Weather Channel (www.weather.com). Of course, if your school participates in the 4-Winds network or similar reporting network, accurate local information is already available to you.
- **WHAT IS WEATHER RADIO?**
  NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information direct from a nearby National Weather Service office. NWR broadcasts National Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24 hours a day.

  Working with the Federal Communications Commission's new emergency alert system, NWR is an "all hazards" radio network, making it the single source for the most comprehensive weather and emergency information available to the public. NWR also broadcasts warning and postevent information for all types of hazards--both natural (such as earthquakes and volcano activity) and technological (such as chemical releases or oil spills). NWR requires a special radio receiver or scanner capable of picking up the signal. Broadcasts in the Fairfax County area are found in the public service band at 162.550 MHz (call KHB 36).

For more information, visit our web site, www.fcps.edu/fts/safety-security/factsheets/seh-23.pdf
If you need assistance, call the safety section at 703-658-3770