

**WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SEVERE WEATHER MONITORING AND RESPONSE
PROCEDURE**



WAUBONSEE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, faculty, staff, and visitors during periods of severe weather (thunderstorms, potential tornadoes, hail, heavy rain, and wind in excess of 58 mph). This procedure describes the methods the college employs to monitor and respond to severe weather impacting any Waubonsee location. The college president or designee holds the sole authority to declare a change in operational status due to severe weather.

Weather Monitoring

Waubonsee Community College (WCC) has various methods for monitoring weather notifications however, our primary source is the National Weather Service (NWS).

NWS alerts affecting any or all college locations are monitored by the Campus Police Department during campus hours. Campus Police has the primary responsibility for monitoring NWS severe weather alerts and notifying employees and students when necessary. Campus Police is staffed twenty-four hours every day of the year and maintains the systems used for issuing just-in-time emergency notifications. Additionally, the Director of Emergency Management and Executive Director of Campus Safety and Operations monitor for severe weather conditions that may impact the area surrounding college locations.

The Executive Director for Campus Safety and Operations and the Director of Emergency Management, will provide advanced notice to the college Incident Management Team (IMT) to allow for additional preparedness measures to be taken when necessary.

Weather conditions are routinely monitored by Athletics Department Managers and Trainers during scheduled games/practices. Athletics Department staff uses the ThorGuard lightning detection system for instant notifications of lightning in the vicinity of the Sugar Grove campus.

Outside organizations utilizing WCC athletic facilities are required to provide a weather monitoring and emergency action plan (EAP) to the Athletics Department prior to scheduled events on college property. The EAP includes points of contact for personnel responsible for monitoring weather and activating emergency procedures. WCC Athletics employees, students, and volunteers will follow emergency protocols of the hosting institution when away. See Appendix C: *Severe Weather Preparedness for Athletics Program Travel* for additional information.

Off-site Events

Departments responsible for planning or coordinating staff/student involvement at off-site events must complete the *Off-site Events Safety Checklist* (Appendix A) prior to the event and follow the procedures included in that document and below. Events conducted on college property will be covered under the college weather monitoring and response procedures provided in this document.

The following planning items are required when WCC personnel (employees or student groups) will conduct or attend off-site events:

- Complete the *Off-site Safety Checklist* prior to the event.
- Ensure the personnel attending the event have the ability to directly monitor, or be notified of severe weather alerts issued by the NWS.
- Have a pre-determined location that can be reached quickly for shelter during a severe weather event.
- Instruct employees/students/volunteers to relocate to the nearest shelter if a

Thunderstorm Warning or Tornado Warning is issued by the NWS for the hosting jurisdiction.

Additional department weather monitoring responsibilities are described on page four of this document.

Suspension of Classes, Events, and Activities Due to Severe Weather

If significant risks are imposed by severe weather near any campus location, the college may suspend or cancel classes, events, and activities. The college must have reliable information indicating that a severe storm will be both significant and localized, posing potentially life-threatening conditions for our community to necessitate interruption of ongoing classes, events, and activities. The college must also evaluate whether suspension or cancellation of ongoing activities is the optimal decision for the safety of employees and students. Due to these factors, providing advance notice (multiple hours or less) for suspension or cancellation of activities may not be possible. During severe weather, the most reliable and widely recommended protective actions are based on NWS guidance for issued Watches and Warnings to include when and where individuals should seek shelter.

If severe weather is anticipated, Campus Police along with the Director of Emergency Management and Executive Director of Campus Safety and Operations will closely monitor National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts, alerts, and warnings. When necessary, any staff member responsible for monitoring weather conditions for the entire college, along with the Vice President for Finance and Administration, may seek approval from the College President or his/her designee to temporarily suspend or cancel classes, events, and activities due to severe weather conditions. If the decision is made to suspend activities, all ongoing classes and other events will be temporarily paused until the severe weather threat has passed. Activity suspensions/cancellations can be implemented for one or more campuses dependent on the situation. The primary reason for a suspension or cancellation is to mitigate transportation risks for students and employees until the severe weather threat has passed. During periods of activity suspension, faculty, students, and other employees may review emergency flip charts and floor plans for shelter-in-place locations and procedures.

Regardless of cancellation/suspension status, the college will remain open for shelter for employees, students, and community members during regular business hours.

Specific criteria for consideration of suspension or cancellation of classes, events, and activities for severe weather situations include:

- High potential for significant severe weather system(s) with strong intensity impacting college locations (damaging winds, torrential rainfall, hail, lightning, potential tornadoes).
- NWS severe weather threat level ranking (0-5, 5 being most critical).
- Forecasted duration of severe weather impacts.
- Safe travel considerations (i.e., low visibility due to torrential rainfall, flash flooding, etc.).
- High certainty from NWS forecasts predicting tornadic activity in the immediate area of college locations.

If the college must suspend or cancel classes, events, or activities the following notifications will be issued:

- The staff member(s) in communication with the President/designee will notify Campus Police to activate the following alerts:
 - Campus Police will notify all college employees and students via the Waubonsee Alert System (voice/text/voice) and public address system.
 - Text *“Waubonsee Alert. All classes, activities, and events are [suspended/canceled] due to severe weather. The college is open for shelter. Standby for further updates.”*
 - Email: *“All classes, activities, and events are [suspended/canceled] due to severe weather. The college will remain open for shelter. Do not travel to Waubonsee Community College if you have not already departed. Traveling is not recommended at this time. Standby for further updates.”*
 - Voice: *“This is a Waubonsee Emergency Alert. All classes, activities, and events are [suspended/canceled] due to severe weather. The college will remain open for shelter. Do not travel to Waubonsee Community College if you have not already departed. Traveling is not recommended at this time. Standby for further updates.”*
 - Campus police will issue audible alerts over the college public address system at each location.

If a tornado warning is issued during regular college hours, Campus Police will immediately activate shelter-in-place protocol by notifying all college building occupants to move to a designated severe weather shelter area via the public address system. This action occurs automatically and does not require prior authorization.

Resuming Normal Operations

If classes, activities, or events were suspended or canceled, Campus Police will issue a message via the Waubonsee Alert System to announce the all clear to resume all activities once the threat has ended.

- Campus Police will notify all college employees and students via the Waubonsee Alert System (voice/text/voice):
 - Text *“The severe weather threat has passed the area of the college. All classes, activities, and events may resume.”*
 - Email: *“The severe weather threat has passed the area of the college. All classes, activities, and events will resume at their regular scheduled times. Please be patient with any delays and interruptions as all activities resume.”*
 - Voice: *“The severe weather threat has passed the area of the college. All classes, activities, and events will resume at their regular scheduled times. Please be patient with any delays and interruptions as all activities resume.”*
 - Campus police will issue audible alerts over the college public address system at each location announcing the all clear and safe to resume message.

Tornado/Severe Weather WATCH and WARNING Protocol

- During a tornado/severe weather WATCH, the college will monitor weather conditions as reported by the National Weather Service.
- Classes, activities, and events will continue.

Tornado Warnings

If a tornado warning has been issued, Campus Police will immediately activate shelter-in-place protocol by notifying all affected campus locations to move to a designated severe weather shelter area via the public address system. This action occurs automatically and does not require prior authorization. Each building has designated severe weather shelter areas. Floor plans in every classroom and office area indicate where these shelters are located. All severe weather shelter areas are designated by signage.

- Campus Police actively monitors severe weather updates from the NWS.
- If a tornado warning is issued, Campus Police staff will activate the building public address system and announce the following message:
“May I have your attention please. The National Weather Service has issued a tornado warning for (your location until time). Move to a shelter area now on the first floor of your building, interior room, or hallway away from windows. Remain in a safe location until the warning expires.” (Repeat Twice).
- Following the verbal announcement, the Campus Police operator will initiate the automated warning message through the Edwards annunciator panel system. This can be done at the Sugar Grove Campus Police at the main desk or at each individual building.
- Once the tornado warning has expired, Campus Police will announce the following message:
“May I have your attention please. The Tornado Warning for [location] has expired. Campus Police are evaluating campus for any damage that may have occurred. If your area has incurred damage, or there are people with injuries in your area, please remain where you are and contact us at x2552.” (Repeat Twice).

If a Campus Safety Officer (CSO) or Police Officer cannot access the building public address system annunciator panel at an extension campus, they must immediately contact Sugar Grove Campus Police to broadcast the notification for them.

Additionally, the National Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) broadcast wireless emergency alerts including tornado warnings via cell phone towers to all mobile phones within the affected jurisdiction.

Department Responsibilities

Campus Police: Monitors weather forecast and alerts issued by the NWS. Makes notifications to all staff and students when Tornado Warnings are issued by the NWS and/or local sirens are activated. Issues alerts for suspension or cancellation of activities during intense severe weather as directed by the President/designee. Gives “all clear” announcement when a tornado warning expires.

Emergency Management: Monitors weather forecast and alerts issued by the NWS. Notifies Vice President of Finance and Administration and other college leadership when significant severe weather is expected to impact the vicinity of any college location. Advises college

departments on anticipated weather impacts to planned outdoor events. Regularly consults and updates this document along with associated plans and procedures.

Executive Director of Campus Safety and Operations: Serves as a tertiary backup for monitoring weather alerts and informing college leadership as necessary. Oversees Campus Police and ensures testing and maintenance of all emergency notification systems is performed on a routine basis.

Athletics: Monitors weather alerts during all games, practices, and scheduled events involving athletics employees and/or students. Follows guidelines established by National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) and American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) for suspension, delay, and cancelation of activities due to weather conditions.

Boys and Girls Clubs of North Central Illinois Child Care Program - Aurora Down-town Campus: Monitors weather alerts and maintains situational awareness of where staff and children are located on college property. Provides timely direction to staff to suspend outdoor activities and return indoors during periods of lightning or other severe weather conditions/active alerts. Aware of Waubonsee severe weather procedures and will receive notifications via the building public address system. Accounts for all youth prior to sheltering.

Campus Operations: Building and Grounds: Monitors weather alerts and maintains situational awareness of where staff are located on college property. Provides timely direction to staff to suspend outdoor work and return indoors during periods of lightning or other severe weather conditions/active alerts.

Campus Operations: Plant Operations: Monitors weather alerts and maintains situational awareness of where staff are located on college property. Provides timely direction to staff to suspend outdoor work and return indoors during periods of lightning or other severe weather conditions/active alerts. Maintains all building mechanical systems. Adjust system controls as necessary to prevent malfunctions (i.e., heating, venting, air conditioning, emergency lighting, etc.). Responsible for monitoring building system operational status and addressing any service disruptions. Immediately notifies Executive Director of Campus Safety and Operations or Director of Emergency Management of any power outages.

Arts and Humanities: Ceramics Faculty/Staff: Monitors weather forecast and alerts when staff and students will be using the Kiln yard. Reschedules kiln work when severe weather is forecasted. Assist with directing staff/students to shelter if needed.

Community Engagement and Development: Completes the *Off-site Event Safety Checklist* prior to any off-site event WCC employees, students, or volunteers are attending. Ensure the personnel attending the event have the ability to monitor, or be notified of weather alerts. Have a pre-determined location that can be reached quickly to take shelter during a severe weather event. Instruct employees/students/volunteers to head to the nearest shelter if a Severe Weather Warning or Tornado Warning is issued by the NWS for the hosting jurisdiction.

Student Engagement: Maintains current list of student organization events held on college property and assist organizers to suspend, delay, or reschedule events due to unsafe weather conditions as directed by the college. Ensures the Off-site Event Safety Checklist is completed for any off-campus events students will be attending as an official WCC function.

Marketing and Communications: Manage and assist with social media, WCC website, and other official college updates regarding severe weather as needed.

Incident Management Team: Receives notifications and maintains situational awareness of potential impacts from weather conditions. Assembles immediately after all clear is given when college property is impacted and initiates response actions. Makes proper notifications to

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Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and other staff as needed.

Campus Services: Assist with distributing information to employees and students as needed.

Actions Required by Alert Type

The table below details notifications to be made upon NWS alerts issued during college hours.

NWS Alert Type	Definition	Actions Required
Severe Thunderstorm Watch	A Severe Thunderstorm Watch is issued when severe thunderstorms are <i>possible</i> in and near the watch area. It does not mean that they will occur. It only means they are <i>possible</i> . Severe thunderstorms are defined as follows: 1) Winds of 58 mph or higher AND/OR 2) Hail 1 inch in diameter or larger.	All required departments actively monitor weather alerts.
Severe Thunderstorm Warning	A Severe Thunderstorm Warning is issued when severe thunderstorms are occurring or imminent in the warning area. Severe thunderstorms are defined as follows: 1) Winds of 58 mph or higher AND/OR 2) Hail 1 inch in diameter or larger.	All required departments actively monitor weather alerts. Athletics suspends practice/games when lightning is within 10 miles and/or when the ThorGuard warning system is activated. Skyway Athletic Conference By-Laws in effect. College activities at off-site events pause or cancel to prepare to shelter.
Tornado Watch	A Tornado Watch is issued when severe thunderstorms and tornadoes are possible in and near the watch area. It does not mean that they will occur. It only means they are possible.	All required departments actively monitor weather alerts. Athletics suspends practice/games when lightning is within 10 miles and/or when the ThorGuard warning system is activated. Skyway Athletic Conference By-Laws in effect. College activities at off-site events pause or cancel to prepare to shelter.
Tornado Warning	A Tornado Warning is issued when a tornado is imminent . When a tornado warning is issued, seek safe shelter immediately .	Campus Police directs all occupants to take shelter via building public address system. Athletics Trainer/Manager directs all players and attendees to shelter. All college activities at off-site events stop. All attendees take shelter.

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NWS Alert Type	Definition	Actions Required
Heat Advisory	A Heat Advisory is issued when the heat index value <u>is expected to be 100 to 104</u> degrees within the next 12-14 hours. A Heat Advisory may be issued for lower criteria if it is early in the season or during a multi-day heat wave.	Athletics to suspend or cancel practices/games. NJCAA rules in effect.
Extreme Heat Watch	An Extreme Heat Watch is issued when there <u>is potential</u> for the heat index value to reach or exceed 105 degrees within the next 24 to 48 hours.	Athletics to suspend or cancel practices/games. NJCAA rules in effect. Implement administrative controls that limit exposure (work-rest cycles, schedule adjustments, etc.) College activities at off-site events pause or cancel for safety.
Extreme Heat Warning	An Extreme Heat Warning is issued when the heat index value <u>is expected to reach or exceed 105 degrees</u> within the next 12 to 24 hours. An Excessive Heat Warning may be issued for lower criteria if it is early in the season or during a multi-day heat wave	Athletics to suspend or cancel practices/games. NJCAA rules in effect. All non-critical outdoor work activities suspended for all departments. Implement administrative controls that limit exposure (work-rest cycles, schedule adjustments, etc.) College activities at off-site events pause or cancel for safety.
Air Quality – Red (151-200)	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.	Student-athletes with respiratory conditions will be removed from outdoor activities and all others will be closely monitored. Departments will allow employees with respiratory conditions to remain inside and suspend outdoor work activities as needed. Suspend or reduce all other non-critical outdoor work activities.
Air Quality – Purple (201-300)	Health Alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.	All athletics field/court activities will be suspended, canceled, or relocated indoors. All outdoor activities suspended for all departments.

Emergency Notification Disclosure:

The integrity of emergency notification systems relies on **objective, standardized criteria** for

alert dissemination. By replacing discretionary judgment with established thresholds and limiting use to **imminent life-threatening scenarios**, we mitigate the risk of unintended adverse effects—such as user desensitization—and ensure necessary protective actions are taken during true emergencies.

Resources:

1. National Weather Service Definitions: <https://www.weather.gov/lwx/warningsdefined>
2. Severe Weather Preparedness Guide for Schools: www.weather.gov/grb/schools
3. NWS Hazardous Weather Preparedness Manual for Schools: www.weather.gov/lot/schoolsafetymanual

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Off-site Event Safety Checklist
- Appendix B: Severe Weather Preparedness for Athletics Program Travel

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Instructions: Use this checklist to evaluate safety considerations before, during, and after an off-site event. Check each item as it is completed. Provide additional notes where needed.

Name/title of person completing this form: _____

Severe Weather Planning for Events:

- Weather forecast for event duration including setup/teardown timeframe: _____
 - If feasible, delay setup for and/or cancel events when NWS issues a Severe Weather Watch (i.e., Severe Thunderstorm Watch, Tornado Watch, or Excessive Heat Watch).
- Does event venue have a facility safe for shelter during severe thunderstorms (58 mph winds or higher and/or lightning/hail)? _____
 - If no, provide address and contact person for designated alternate shelter location: _____
- If event is outdoors, who will monitor weather and make other staff aware of any potential severe weather in the area? _____

Important: If a severe thunderstorm warning or tornado warning is issued during an outdoor event, all staff must be directed to the nearest shelter (hardened building) until the warning expires.

Safety Preventative Measures

1. Will event be held in location known for potential heightened criminal activity or with increased likelihood of threatening behavior? _____
2. Will event be staffed by security personnel or law-enforcement? _____
 - If yes to question 1 and no to question 2, ensure staff attend in groups of two or more or arrange for an escort to and from vehicle upon arrival and when departing event.
3. Is parking area well-lit at night? _____
 - If no, arrange to have an escort to and from vehicle or plan for alternative parking in well-lit areas.

Other Safety Best Practices:

- Ensure staff will be setup in well-lit safe environment in the presence of other event staff/volunteers regardless of event location.
- Upon arrival, conduct brief safety inspection of setup area noting the following items:
 - Uneven ground (i.e., cracks in cement, extension cords, or other trip hazards)
 - Slippery surfaces in walking/standing area Overhead hazards (i.e., signage hanging loosely, low support beams, tree branches, etc.)

- Other potential hazardous items (i.e., broken glass, sharp objects, loose wires, generators, fuel, etc.)
- Identify location of first aid kit, AED machine, other medical devices as needed
- Identify location of fire extinguisher(s)
- Confirm availability of trained CPR/First Aid personnel
- Determine closest hospital/urgent care and travel route
- Ensure hydration stations and heat-illness prevention resources are available as needed
- Identify emergency exits/evacuation routes
- Establish primary method of communications for emergencies (i.e., in-person meeting point, cell-phones, or radios). Perform test if radios will be used and ensure cell-phone coverage is adequate.
- Establish meeting point for emergency situations

Post Event:

- Confirm all staff have left the event safely (especially after dark)
- Log an incident, near misses, or improvement recommendations

Include any near misses, incident reporting, or improvement recommendation in this section:

Guidelines for Traveling During Potential Severe Weather

- Consider delay of departure when a severe thunderstorm warning has been issued for hosting jurisdiction depending on path of travel and location of the storm.
- Do not begin travel when a tornado warning is in effect for the area of departure.
- If a tornado warning is issued for a jurisdiction in which currently traveling, drive to a nearby safe building such as a hotel, restaurant, or other potential safe shelter location.
- General preparedness guidelines for Athletics Program Travel:
 - Plan ahead for emergency stops along the route including facilities to take shelter (e.g., hotels, restaurants, public buildings, etc.)
 - Reduce speed during periods of heavy rainfall or high wind speeds.
 - Do not drive through high standing or areas of flowing water on roadway.
 - If driving when an immediate tornado impact is possible, follow the NWS guidelines below:

In vehicles or outdoors: when tornadoes are possible. Limit your outdoor plans or finish them early. Stay close to a sturdy shelter. If caught outside, find shelter in a ditch or remain in your vehicle and cover your head for protection. Do not take shelter under a highway overpass, where wind speeds can increase due to a tunneling effect. It is best to not put yourself or others in a situation where no sturdy shelter is available

(source: <https://www.weather.gov/ama/SEVERESAFETYTIPS>)