

Inclement/Hazardous Weather

June 2016

The NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports released the following statement in June 2016 on inclement/hazardous weather for athletics departments.

Inclement weather poses unique challenges to athletics operations, partly because of the seasonal and geographic frequency of such events, and because of the disparate impact on members of the athletics team. Student-athletes, most of whom live on or very close to campus, are impacted differently than coaches, support staff, and athletics administrators, who may live at some distance from campus, and who are, therefore, subject to weather conditions that may be very different than those occurring on campus. They may also have the additional difficulty of a commute.

In recent years, the committee has fielded complaints from athletics support staff who report having to journey to campus during inclement weather to attend practices or other non-competition events, even when the campus has been effectively shut down and classes canceled. These complaints become more pronounced when athletics personnel believe themselves to be exposed to personal risks to attend what are perceived as non-essential activities, and especially for practices and other obligations for sports outside of the traditional season. Consequently, the committee provides member institutions the following guidance for inclement winter weather conditions:

- a. Athletics department personnel must recognize that decisions affecting the broader institutional community also apply to them. Serious consideration should be given to the appropriateness of requiring student-athletes, coaches, and support staff to come to campus when the campus is otherwise closed and classes canceled. Local traffic authorities should be consulted about the safety of local roadways.
- b. Decisions about continued athletics activity should be centrally made, preferably by the athletics director or his/her designee. Coaches should not make such decisions for their own sports in isolation and independent of athletics administrators. Decisions should be made with the ultimate goal of protecting the well-being and safety of all athletics personnel and student-athletes. A full accounting of the disparate impact of inclement weather on athletics personnel and participating student-athletes should be made as part of the decision-making process.
- c. When a decision is made to open athletic or recreational facilities and to conduct athletics activities, standardized steps should be taken to ensure the safe access to those facilities and those parts of campus in which the activities will take place.
- d. Athletics personnel who determine that their personal safety might be jeopardized by commuting to campus in inclement and/or hazardous weather should be excused from all responsibilities without fear of reprisal or punishment, and reasonable accommodations for their absence should be made.