

# **Guidance on Weather Delays in Games**

The Montgomery County Public Schools High Schools (MCPS) Athletic Handbook has guidance related to weather conditions, specifically thunder and lightning, as well as warmup requirements. This guidance is as follows. Members can view the handbook pages related to softball on the [Information and Links page of the website](#).

Here are the pertinent sections from the MCPS handbook related to weather delays. There are also several situations on how this handbook guidance gets implemented.

## **MCPS Handbook**

### **Weather and Heat**

#### **Thunder and Lightning**

3. In the event that either thunder or lightning should occur, allow 30 minutes to pass after the last occurrence of thunder and/or lightning before resuming play.

7. When a contest has been suspended for more than one and one-half hours (cumulative time) due to inclement weather, the contest shall be ended. The game will be rescheduled at a later date, or continued from the point of suspension, in accordance with the rules governing that sport.

### **Softball Standards**

#### **Contests**

6. Preparation of fields for games is the responsibility of the home team. Both teams will warm-up on the entire field for twenty (20) minutes. The visiting team will warm-up first.

## **Discussion**

To properly implement the MCPS handbook, CASO has worked with MCPS to develop guidance to help umpires better manage game delays. Note that the cumulative time to end a contest due to inclement weather is the total time per weather event. It is not the total time for warmups, actual play, and weather events.

There is a question about teams using the gym to warm-up while waiting for the 30 minutes to pass. Usually, the gym is not available during softball game times. Schools may have an Allied Softball game being played. Also, coed volleyball is in season and the team may be practicing or playing in the gym.

It is not unusual for softball to be given practice time at 6:00 when rain cancels outdoor practice. Thus, the gym may not be available to the softball teams while they wait for the 30 minutes to pass.

## **Situations**

The following situations provide examples and solutions for different scenarios.

1. There is a thunder event at 3:00 pm before game time and prior to any team getting the opportunity to warmup. At this point, both teams would move to a safe space such as inside the school. Once the 30-minute wait has been met, teams may return to the field.

Because neither team was able to warmup, both teams get 20 minutes to warm-up per the MCPS handbook. A shorter time may be taken if the coaches believe the players are ready to play. If the full 20 minutes is taken by both teams starting at 3:30, then the pregame conference would begin at 4:10 and the game starting at 4:15.

2. After 10 minutes of play, there is a thunder event that delays the game 30 minutes. When the game resumes, play continues for 50 more minutes, then a second thunder event occurs. After waiting the required 30 minutes the game resumes.

In this situation, the game suspension provision in the MCPS handbook is not met. The cumulative delay for weather events is a total of 60 minutes. Therefore, the 90-minute delay provision in the MCPS handbook is not met.

Player warmups do not have to take the full 20 minutes as required prior to the start of the game. Sufficient time should be allowed for players to warm-up. That will be weather dependent given the ambient temperature.

3. The game has started and after 30 minutes of play, there is a weather event. After 15 minutes in the weather delay a second occurs. The game then resumes for another 30 minutes, when a third weather delay occurs.

At this point, the suspension provision in the MCPS handbook is not met. The total weather delay time is 15 minutes for the first event, then 30 minutes for the second event, and 30 minutes for the last event which totals 75 minutes.

4. A weather delay at 3:00 causes a 30-minute wait before teams can warm-up. The game begins at 4:15 after both teams have taken their 20-minute warm-ups. After 45 minutes of play, a second weather delay occurs. Once the 30 minutes have passed, play is resumed, but after 10 minutes of play, a third weather delay occurs.

At this point, the 90-minute delay provision in the MCPS handbook is met. The first delay was 30 minutes, as was the second. These total 60 minutes. The third delay will add an additional 30 minutes thus making the cumulative delay 90 minutes. There is no need to wait 30 minutes. Once the third event occurs, the game is suspended.