

Field Training and Environmental Conditions

CHAPTER 3.3

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Submitted by: Health & Safety Officer

Approved by: Chief of Fire Rescue

PURPOSE

The purpose of this SOG is to establish guidelines and responsibilities for minimizing the effects of environmental conditions to department members during normal field training. Additionally, it will provide guidelines for determining when to cancel or alter outside training exercises based on these environmental conditions.

The Company Officer or Incident Commander must remember that he/she is responsible for the health and safety of these employees.

DESCRIPTION

Normal field training, for this policy, is defined as that training conducted outdoors. This includes all field training including training being conducted at the company level and formal field training conducted by the Department of Fire Rescue Training Division or any other Section or Branch of the Department of Fire Rescue exposing employees directly to any, or all, of the five environmental conditions.

Environmental conditions shall be broken into five areas of concern: heat/humidity, cold, rain, lightning, and wind.

Heat/Humidity

The Heat Index shall be determined by data obtained from the National Weather Service. The Company Officer or Incident Commander on duty will be responsible for obtaining the Heat Index. Whenever the environmental conditions exceed the standard of a Heat Index of 98° F, non-emergency outside training activities shall be curtailed as follows.

- Non-emergency training activities requiring the use of firefighting protective gear (bunkercoat/pants) or other heat-retaining garments shall be discontinued.
- Light outdoor activities are permitted, though supervisors shall allow adequate rest periods for proper hydration and cooling. Supervisors shall monitor employees for indications of heat/environmental stress and modify activities accordingly.
- Members shall notify their supervisors any time they feel that they are approaching an unsafe degree of heat/environmental stress.

Consideration should be taken into account that direct sunlight and bunker gear each add 10 degrees.

Other Environmental Conditions

Whenever the environmental conditions meet or exceed the following standards, all non-emergency outside training and activities shall be discontinued.

- **Rain** – When rain creates an unsafe condition.
- **Lightning** - Upon first sight of lightning, begin counting until thunder is heard. Dividing the number by 5 will determine how far away in miles the lightning is. (Ex: count to 15, divide by 5, lightning is 3 miles away).

All outdoor training shall cease when the distance is 6 miles or less (30 seconds).

- **Wind** - Strong gusty winds may affect ground ladder and elevated non-emergency activities. With winds exceeding 25 mph, all outdoor non-emergency training activities should be discontinued.
- **Cold** - Most training is not conducted in cold weather long enough for exposure or hypothermia to develop, and very few days are at or below freezing.

NOAA states: “The air temperature has to be BELOW freezing for frostbite to develop on exposed skin. Wind chill can NOT bring the temperature to below freezing for humans and animals when the thermometer says it is above freezing so you will not get frostbite; however, you might get hypothermia from exposure to cold.”

Chilblains, definition: Ulcers formed by damaged small blood vessels in the skin, caused by the repeated exposure of skin to temperatures just above freezing to as high as 60 °F.

Hence:

- When the air temperature is 35 degrees F or below, outdoor training shall be timed to limit skin exposure to 15 minutes and then require a 10-minute break in a warm location before further outside activity.

Considering Chilblains and hypothermia/exposure

- When the air temperature is 36-60 degrees F, outdoor training should take into account current air temperature and wind speed and be timed to consider limiting

skin exposure to 30 minutes with a 10-minute break in a warm location before further outside activity.

Temperature	Outdoor Exposure	Warm Location Break
35 F or below	15 minutes	10 minutes
36 F – 60 F	30 minutes	10 minutes

- Officers have the discretion for cessation of any training during inclement weather conditions, with the safety of all members being the highest priority