

| Students 9325 | Administrative Application | | |
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| | Outdoor Air Quality Health Index and Outdoor Activities | Last Reviewed / Approved on: | January 21, 2026 |
| | | References: | Understanding Air Quality Health Messages, Government of Canada Environment Canada Administrative Application 7576 – Employee Safety Responsibilities Policy 12 Role of the Director Policy 12 – Role of the Director |
| | | Status: | Operational |

Preamble

Poor air quality can impact the health and performance of outdoor activity participants, including students and staff. The Regina Catholic School Division (RCSD) recognizes the potential short-and long-term effects of engaging in physical activity outdoors when the air quality is poor. Regina Catholic Schools is fully committed to reducing the risk posed to participants in outdoor activities from poor air quality.

Air quality refers to the quality of outdoor air primarily related to weather, climate, and smoke (forest fires, grass fires, etc.). Air quality impacted by industry or emergent situations should be guided or directed by proper authorities. Air quality is monitored utilizing Environment Canada's Air Quality Health Index (AQHI).

Just as outdoor activities may be cancelled or rescheduled due to lightning or other weather conditions, it is essential to take similar actions to protect participants of outdoor activities when the air quality is poor. Regina Catholic schools will monitor the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) before outdoor activities. This will be done by checking the Environment Canada AQHI prior to the activity and by accessing local sensors such as PurpleAir. There are currently multiple PurpleAir sensors in and around the city of Regina which monitor and update every ten (10) minutes.

Definitions

1. **Outdoor Activities**
Include, but are not limited to, outdoor physical education, extracurricular activities, field trips, and outdoor education activities.
2. **Outdoor Recess**
Outside activity scheduled in the fifteen (15)-minute recesses during the day or before and after school.
3. **Air Quality Health Index (AQHI)**
Air quality refers to the quality of outdoor air primarily related to weather, climate, and smoke (forest fires, grass fires, etc.). Air quality impacted by industry or emergent situations should be guided or directed by proper authorities. Air quality is monitored utilizing Environment Canada's Air Quality Health Index (AQHI). AQHI uses a scale to show the

health risk associated with the air pollution we breathe. The AQHI is calculated based on the relative risks of a combination of common air pollutants. The AQHI provides a local air quality current value as well as a local air quality forecast.

4. **At Risk Population**

People with heart or breathing problems. (Government of Canada, 2023).

5. **PurpleAir Quality Sensors and the PurpleAir Quality Map**

PurpleAir is a small, low-cost air quality sensor that measures particulate matter (PM10, PM2.5, and PM1), ambient temperature, pressure, and relative humidity using sensor technology; reports data in real-time on a user-friendly map website known as the Purple Air Quality Map; and can be used to provide information on air quality, for example when a community experiences wildfire smoke.

Application

Planning for Outdoor Activities

1. RCSD will monitor AQHI; particularly every fall and spring season when wildfires, grass and forest, are most prevalent.
2. When AQHI warnings are issued by Environment Canada, principals, staff, and supervisors/coaches in collaboration with the area superintendent will access the [Real-Time Air Quality Map](#) by PurpleAir to make a determination of the air quality in the area where the outdoor activity will occur.
3. Decisions around outdoor activities will be based on the nature of the activity, the duration of the activity, and the age of the participants.
4. Outdoor recesses with duration of less than thirty (30) minutes:
 - a. AQHI of 8 or higher: the school principal will consult with the area superintendent and access PurpleAir to decide if it shall be moved indoors.
5. Outdoor activities such as physical education classes, outdoor field trips, and/or extracurricular activities which are longer in duration and intensity will adhere to the following guidelines:
 - a. Elementary: AQHI of eight (8) or higher - all curricular outdoor activities are moved indoors. Determination for practices and games/meets for extracurricular activities will be made in consultation with the superintendent responsible for elementary extracurricular activities.
 - b. High School: AQHI of eight (8) or higher – all curricular outdoor activities are moved indoors. Determination for practices and games/meets for extracurricular activities will be made in consultation with the RHSAA.

6. Outdoor Education Trips - Air quality can change quickly. If your school is planning an overnight or extended outdoor field trip, your trip itinerary must include contingency plans for AQHI. Check the conditions prior to leaving, have a plan to move activities indoors, have a plan for an early return.