



## **P2025-3 - GHTA Weather Policy (April 26, 2025)**

Weather conditions are a serious and sometimes difficult consideration for hike leaders. Our policy will enable hikers to use caution when outside on the trail or travelling to a hike destination.

It is a hike leader's ultimate decision to proceed with or cancel a hike, or adjust it as needed due to weather conditions and the group's physical ability.

### **Heat**

To protect against heat emergencies, wear a hat and sunscreen, stay well hydrated as you walk and drink plenty of water. Adjust length and difficulty of a hike, as needed.

The following are the most common types of heat problems:

### **Sunburn**

Sunburn is caused by the ultraviolet rays in sunlight.

#### Prevention:

Staying out of the sun during peak hours 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, applying sunscreen, seeking shade and wear protective clothing.

### **Heat Cramps**

Heat Cramps are painful muscle spasms that occur due to dehydration and loss of nutrients from excessive sweating.

#### Prevention:

Drink something with electrolytes and cooling your body should help.

### **Heat Exhaustion**

Heat Exhaustion is a heat related illness characterized by the bodies inability to effectively cool itself, typically occurring in high ambient temperatures or during intense physical exertion.

#### Prevention:

Wear loose and lightweight clothing, avoid strenuous activity in extreme heat.

## **Heat Stroke**

Heat Stroke is a severe heat illness that results in a body temperature greater than 40C along with red skin, headache, dizziness, and confusion. EMS (911) should be called ASAP for assistance.

### Prevention:

Drink sufficient fluids and avoid excessive heat.

## **Hypothermia**

Prolonged exposure to temperatures under -10 C, after prolonged immersion in cold water of temperatures less than -20 C, or exposed skins of high winds.

### Prevention

Wear warm, multi-layered clothing with good hand and feet protection.

Wear warm headgear.

If possible, change into dry clothing when clothes become wet.

Find appropriate shelter to stay warm.

Take into consideration the effects of the wind chill factor.

## **Wind**

Wind is a significant danger when working or hiking in the forest or in an area with trees. Wind can cause weakened parts of the tree or Chicot's (dead standing trees) to fall from above resulting in serious injury or death. A tree may not become dangerous to volunteers and hikers, until certain wind speeds are encountered. If wind speeds exceed 40 Km/h activities should be stopped or suspended until conditions moderate. Following an ice storm, it is not recommended to enter a forest unless the forecast wind speed is 25 Km/h or less with no wind gusts.

## **Blizzards, freezing rain**

For the safety of participating hikers, hike leaders should assess driving conditions to and from a hike destination, especially when carpooling to a hike, and cancel the hike when considered too treacherous.

## **Thunderstorms**

Avoid open spaces, hills and high places or steep slopes. If you are in the forest stay there, but keep away the edge of the forest, clearings or isolated trees. Avoid wet areas, such as ditches. Do not lie down on the ground. Squat low to the ground with your feet together and keep your arms near your body. Tuck your head between your knees and avoid making contact with the ground with any other part of your body (use your backpack to crouch on).

Refer to tree safety shadows for safe place to crouch when there is lightening: ½ distance of the height of the tree away from the tree. This will reduce your risk of being struck by lightening.

If using an umbrella or poles while hiking, stash them away when there is lightening and pick them up later.

### **PLACES TO SEEK:**

A safety shadow  
Boulders resting on boulders  
An insulated surface to crouch on  
Well-drained ground  
Among low trees or thick brush

### **PLACES TO AVOID:**

Ridges or pinnacles  
The water  
Beneath tall trees  
Depressions or gullies  
Drainages  
Caves and overhangs  
Tents

### **To avoid a lightning strike: use the 30-30 Rule:**

- 30 seconds: Count the seconds between seeing lightning and hearing thunder. If this time is less than 30 seconds, lightning is a threat. Seek shelter immediately. Even if you can't see the lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good backup rule.
- 30 minutes: After hearing the last rumble of thunder, wait 30 minutes before leaving shelter. There is still danger after the storm is over, so stay in a safe area until you are sure the threat has passed.

\*\* Listen to weather warnings. Try to give enough notice for hike cancellation i.e. minimum of 1 hour.