



ADVERSE WEATHER GUIDANCE

FOR COUNTY EVENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

It is often difficult for a Competition Committee to decide when to suspend or discontinue play due to poor weather conditions. However, there are indicators in terms of weather forecasting or on-course conditions that can help with decision making. The players themselves can decide to stop play (Rule 5.7a) either by agreement in Matchplay or individually because of lightning. The guidance below is aimed at keeping players safe in the event of adverse weather and fair playing conditions.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Competition Committee

The overall safety of players during competition is the responsibility of the Competition Committee (s3. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Common Law 'Duty of Care'). This requires the committee to assess the risk to players both before and during play and implement mitigation measures. The measures may be one or more alterations to:

- the course (marking, cut height greens, etc.);
- start times (delay due to fog etc.);
- the format (reduced number of holes);
- local rules; and,
- Suspending play.

b. Host Clubs

Host Clubs have responsibilities for any person (authorised or unauthorised) on their course or in their clubhouse (Occupiers Liability Act 1957 & 1984). The Competition Committee and Host Club need to work together to ensure player safety. This will involve the agreement of any mitigating measures and emergency procedures.

c. Players

Players have Common Law responsibilities to look after themselves and others and must follow the instructions and Rules set out by the Competition Committee, the only exception being when there is an imminent threat from lightning.

3. ADVERSE WEATHER

The incidence of adverse weather is increasing. Higher temperatures and heavier rain (incidence of storms) are expected to affect mid-latitude countries such as the UK. Guidance on the weather conditions most likely to cause a suspension of play is given below:

a. Fog and Mist

Players should be able to see where their ball lands in relation to any players in front. As a guide, play should not start or should be suspended if the visibility is below 200 yards (the average driving distance of a 'bogey' golfer).

b. Heavy Rain

Heavy rain can cause temporary water to accumulate in a short time. Putting greens are prone to flood more quickly than fairways. Play should be suspended when putting greens are flooded to the extent that relief from temporary water (complete or maximum available relief) cannot be taken.

c. Strong Wind

High winds are not generally a reason for suspending play on most courses. However, there are two occasions where play may be suspended:

- wind speeds of over 45mph; and,
- where balls at rest on putting greens are being moved by the wind - the movement of balls on putting greens needs to be monitored and play suspended if balls are being moved by wind on multiple putting greens.

d. High Temperatures and Humidity

Weather forecasting is good at predicting high temperatures, but humidity also needs to be considered. The risk to players health increases as both temperature and humidity increase - above 28°C and 80% humidity there is a significant risk of heatstroke.

Heatwave conditions are accurately forecasted, and the competition Committee can take steps to reduce the risk to players by having earlier start times, changing the format (reducing a two-round competition to one round) and providing additional water.

e. Lightning

Lightning is unpredictable. According to the Met Office, lightning can strike 10 miles or more from a thunderstorm's core, the distance increasing with the size of the storm. Fortunately, weather radar and lightning detection can be used to follow a storm's path and where lightning strikes are occurring. The decision to suspend play must be taken well in advance of an approaching storm for players to evacuate the course (approx. 20 minutes on most courses) and return to the safety of the clubhouse. Play should be suspended when an approaching storm is about 20 miles away and its track will take it within a radius of 10 miles of the course. Play should not be resumed for 30 minutes after the last lightning strike within the 10-mile radius.

4. LIAISON WITH THE HOST CLUB

Any decision to suspend play needs to be discussed with the host club – there will be local knowledge about weather conditions and a klaxon / siren to notify players (the County will use air horns if no klaxon / siren is available). Where the County are the only users of the course (mainly 36 holes competitions) the competition committee (County Secretary and Referees present on the day) will make the decision.

For matches and smaller competitions there will also be host club players on the course and the Course manager and / or Professional MUST be part of the decision-making process. The County cannot over-ride a decision by the Course Manager and / or Professional to continue play for their members. In such cases the County will use referees and County officials to notify players that a match or competition has been suspended.