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# ENVIRONMENTAL RISK AND SAFETY POLICY

## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The Whitehorse Glacier Bears Swim Club (WGB) is committed to providing a safe environment for athletes, members, volunteers, and staff. Given the climate and geographic conditions of Whitehorse and the Yukon Territory, cold weather and hazardous environmental conditions present increased safety risks related to travel, exposure, and emergency response.

This policy establishes clear criteria and procedures for the cancellation, modification, or continuation of WGB activities during periods of cold weather and/or hazardous environmental conditions.

## 2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- I. Define clear thresholds for practice cancellations due to cold weather and/or hazardous environmental conditions that may create risk to members, staff, and volunteers, particularly during travel to and from practices;
- II. Establish consistent decision-making and communication timelines;
- III. Identify safety considerations and precautions for staff and members; and
- IV. Ensure WGB meets its duty of care and due diligence obligations under Yukon's Occupational Health and Safety legislation and regulations.

## 3.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Yukon Societies Act*
- *WGB Bylaws*
- *Conflict of Interest Policy*
- *Confidentiality Policy*
- *Directors' Roles and Responsibilities*

## 4.0 SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all WGB programs, practices, events, staff, volunteers, athletes, and members.

## 5.0 WEATHER INFORMATION SOURCE

WGB will use Environment Canada as its primary authoritative source for assessing temperature and environmental conditions.

However, WGB recognizes that during extreme or rapidly evolving weather events, a single data source may not always provide the most accurate or localized conditions. In such circumstances, WGB may rely on a combination of

credible sources to inform decision-making, including but not limited to:

- I. Environment Canada
- II. Yukon Government highway and road condition reports
- III. Municipal advisories
- IV. Local emergency management agencies
- V. Reputable meteorological services
- VI. Direct observations from WGB staff or facility operators

When conflicting or unclear information exists, WGB will apply a precautionary approach, prioritizing safety and risk reduction over program continuity.

Final decisions will be based on:

- I. The most conservative and safety-oriented interpretation of available data; and
- II. The reasonable professional judgment of the Executive Director (or designate), informed by available evidence.

WGB reserves the right to cancel or modify activities when conditions appear unsafe, even if formal thresholds or alerts have not yet been issued.

## **6.0 WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY THRESHOLDS**

WGB recognizes that unsafe conditions may arise not only from extreme cold, but also from other hazardous environmental factors that increase the risk of injury, exposure, or unsafe travel.

### **6.1 Temperature Threshold**

When the ambient air temperature is  $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$  or colder, all scheduled WGB practices will be automatically cancelled.

Ambient air temperature refers to the actual measured air temperature and does not include wind chill.

When temperatures are warmer than  $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$ , practices may proceed, subject to professional judgment and the additional safety considerations outlined in this policy.

While wind chill will not be used as a numerical threshold, it may be considered as a contributing risk factor within the broader safety hazard assessment, particularly with respect to frostbite risk, outdoor exposure, and travel safety.

### **6.2 Hazardous Environmental Conditions**

Practices, events, or activities may be cancelled, delayed, or modified when environmental conditions create an unreasonable risk to the safety of members, staff, or volunteers. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

- Freezing rain or ice accumulation;
- Reduced visibility due to blowing snow, ice fog, or heavy snowfall;
- Severe wind conditions;

- Road closures, highway advisories, or travel restrictions;
- Extreme snowfall affecting access to facilities;
- Any Environment Canada weather alerts, warnings, or advisories indicating hazardous or unsafe conditions.

The presence of any of these conditions may trigger a cancellation or modification, even if the temperature threshold has not been met.

## **7.0 NOTIFICATION TIMELINES**

WGB will make every reasonable effort to provide advance notice of cancellations or program modifications due to cold weather or hazardous environmental conditions:

1. Morning practices: Notice will be provided at least 10 hours prior to the scheduled practice start time.
2. Afternoon or evening practices: Notice will be provided at least 3 hours prior to the scheduled practice start time.

Notifications will be communicated through WGB's established communication channels (e.g., WGB's Pool Queue platform, coach email, or mobile messaging).

## **8.0 EVENTS**

In circumstances where a special event (e.g., competitions, camps, team activities, or meetings) is scheduled during periods of cold weather or hazardous environmental conditions:

1. The decision to proceed, modify, or cancel the event will be made at the discretion of the Executive Director, in consultation with the Board of Directors.
2. A safety hazard assessment must be completed prior to confirming that the event will proceed.
3. Consideration will be given to travel requirements, duration of outdoor exposure, facility access, staffing, and emergency preparedness.

## **9.0 DISCRETION AND OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY**

During extended cold snaps or prolonged hazardous environmental conditions, WGB may conduct a formal safety assessment to determine whether limited programming may safely continue.

With the approval of the Executive Director and the Board of Directors, practices for competitive groups only may proceed under modified conditions, provided that:

- Travel risks are deemed manageable;
- Facility access is safe and reliable;
- Emergency response capacity is not compromised; and
- Adequate staffing levels can be maintained.

If there are insufficient coaches available to meet safe supervision ratios due to weather-related circumstances, the practice will be cancelled.

## **10.0 SAFETY HAZARD ASSESSMENT**

When cold weather or hazardous environmental conditions are anticipated, WGB will assess the following hazards:

- I. Risk of frostbite, hypothermia, or cold-related injuries;
- II. Risk of slips, falls, or accidents due to ice or poor visibility;
- III. Increased risk associated with vehicle breakdowns or stranded travel;
- IV. Delays in emergency response times;
- V. Accessibility of facilities, parking areas, and entrances;
- VI. Staff availability and ability to safely report to work.

Mitigation measures may include cancellations, schedule adjustments, reduced program duration, or additional safety instructions to members.

## **11.0 ATHLETE AND MEMBER PRECAUTIONS**

Members, athletes, and families are encouraged to:

- I. Dress appropriately for cold and hazardous weather conditions, including insulated outerwear, hats, gloves, scarves, and proper winter footwear;
- II. Limit time spent outdoors before and after practices;
- III. Ensure vehicles are winterized and fueled appropriately;
- IV. Carry emergency supplies when traveling (e.g., phone charger, blankets);
- V. Monitor weather alerts and road conditions;
- VI. Use discretion and prioritize personal safety when deciding whether to travel, even if a practice has not been cancelled.

No athlete or family will be penalized for choosing not to attend due to safety concerns related to weather or environmental conditions.

## **12.0 STAFF AND VOLUNTEER PRECAUTIONS**

WGB staff and volunteers are expected to:

- I. Follow this policy and any related safety directives;
- II. Use appropriate winter clothing and footwear when traveling for work-related duties;
- III. Report any safety concerns or hazards to the Executive Director as soon as reasonably possible;
- IV. Exercise their right to refuse unsafe work in accordance with Yukon occupational health and safety legislation, without fear of reprisal.

## **13.0 AUTHORITY AND REVIEW**

The Executive Director is responsible for implementing this policy. The Board of Directors retains oversight responsibility.

This policy will be reviewed as needed and at least every two years, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation or operating conditions.