

Quad County Weather Academy

Back-to-School Weather Readiness Guide

Know the forecast. Know the risks. Know what to do.

This adult-focused readiness kit is designed for parents, caregivers, teachers, coaches, school staff, administrators, and volunteers who make daily decisions around school schedules, transportation, outdoor activities, and student safety.

Your Free Back-to-School Weather Readiness Kit

- Severe Weather Quick Reference
- School Weather Checklist
- Heat and Lightning Safety Guide
- Weather Decision-Making Scenarios
- 5-Minute Daily Weather Check

5-Minute Back-to-School Weather Check

Use this quick check every morning before students leave for school and again before afternoon activities.

Every Morning	Check
Temperature	☐ What is today's expected high?
Heat index	☐ Will heat stress affect recess, PE, practice, or outdoor events?
Storm risk	☐ Are thunderstorms or severe storms possible?
Alerts	☐ Are there watches, warnings, advisories, or special weather statements?
Dismissal timing	☐ Could storms, heavy rain, lightning, or wind affect pickup or buses?
Outdoor activities	☐ Are sports, band, recess, field trips, or after-school programs planned?
Adjustment needed	☐ Do I need to adjust clothing, pickup plans, practice plans, or communication?

Back-to-School Weather Checklist

- Check the local forecast before the school day begins.
- Review temperature, humidity, and heat index for outdoor activities.
- Look for thunderstorm chances during arrival, dismissal, and practice times.

- Check for severe weather outlooks, watches, and warnings.
- Review wind speeds and gusts for buses, outdoor equipment, and events.
- Watch for heavy rain, flash flooding, and road/travel concerns.
- Confirm how weather updates will be communicated to families and staff.

Severe Weather and Schools

Watch means be prepared. Warning means take action. A watch is issued when conditions are favorable for hazardous weather. A warning is issued when dangerous weather is occurring or indicated by radar, and action should be taken immediately.

Alert	What it means	School action mindset
Tornado Watch	Tornadoes are possible in or near the watch area.	Review shelter plans, monitor updates, and be ready to move quickly.
Tornado Warning	A tornado has been indicated by radar or reported.	Move to shelter immediately. Avoid windows, large rooms, and exterior walls.
Severe Thunderstorm Watch	Severe storms are possible.	Prepare for changing plans, especially dismissal and outdoor activities.
Severe Thunderstorm Warning	Severe weather is occurring or indicated by radar.	Move people indoors, pause outdoor activities, and reassess transportation timing.

Schools may shelter or delay activities even when severe weather is not directly overhead because storms can move quickly, warnings may cover a broader area than a single building, and lightning can be dangerous before or after the heaviest rain arrives.

Your Back-to-School Weather Toolkit

When	What to check
Before school	Forecast, temperature, heat index, thunderstorm chances, and road conditions.
During school	Watches, warnings, radar trends, and timing for dismissal.
After school	Storms, heavy rain, lightning, wind, and travel impacts before activities.
Before practice or games	Heat index, hydration plan, lightning risk, storm timing, and shelter options.

Weather and Student Transportation

- **Bus routes:** Watch for flooded low-water crossings, slick roads, reduced visibility, and high winds.
- **Morning drop-off:** Plan for heavy rain, lightning, icy surfaces later in the year, and traffic delays.
- **Afternoon pickup:** Recheck storms before dismissal and avoid sending students into lightning, damaging wind, or flash flooding risk.
- **Outdoor waiting areas:** Move students indoors when lightning is nearby or storms are approaching.
- **Winter weather:** Later in the school year, monitor snow, freezing rain, wind chill, and road treatment status.

Heat, Lightning, and Back-to-School Activities

- Use the heat index, not just the air temperature, when planning recess, PE, band, football, and outdoor events.
- Build in hydration breaks and shade or indoor cooling options.
- Watch athletes, band members, staff, and volunteers for signs of heat stress.
- When thunder is heard or lightning is seen, move indoors or to a safe shelter.
- Do not resume outdoor activities until conditions are safe according to local policy and official guidance.

What Would You Do? Weather Decision Scenarios

Scenario 1: Warning before dismissal

A severe thunderstorm warning is issued 20 minutes before afternoon dismissal. Consider delaying dismissal, keeping students indoors, pausing bus loading, communicating with families, and monitoring whether damaging wind, hail, lightning, or flooding may affect travel.

Scenario 2: Heat index climbs before practice

The forecast high is manageable, but the heat index rises sharply by late afternoon. Reassess practice length, water breaks, shaded rest, equipment needs, and whether the activity should be moved, shortened, or delayed.

Scenario 3: Lightning near an outdoor event

Thunder is heard while students are outside for an event. Move everyone indoors or to a safe shelter, pause the event, and communicate clearly before resuming only when conditions are safe.

Scenario 4: Heavy rain during bus routes

Heavy rain begins during afternoon transportation. Watch for ponding, flooded roads, reduced visibility, and reports from drivers. Routes may need to be slowed, adjusted, or delayed to avoid unsafe travel.

Scenario 5: Tornado watch during school hours

A tornado watch is issued for the area. This is the time to review shelter roles, check communication channels, monitor updates closely, and be ready to act immediately if a warning is issued.

Parent, Teacher, Coach, and Staff Checklist

- Know where to get official weather alerts.
- Know the school's communication process for delays, sheltering, cancellations, and dismissals.
- Keep emergency contacts current.
- Have a plan for unexpected early dismissal or delayed pickup.
- Review shelter locations for classrooms, gyms, fields, buses, and activity areas.
- Recheck the forecast before outdoor events, practices, and travel.

End-of-Guide Weather Ready Checklist

- ☐ I know the difference between a watch and a warning.
- ☐ I know where students should shelter during a tornado warning.
- ☐ I check heat index before outdoor activities.
- ☐ I take lightning seriously and move indoors quickly.
- ☐ I consider weather impacts on buses, pickup, and after-school activities.
- ☐ I know how the school will communicate weather-related changes.