

Polar Plunge

Weather Safety Guidelines

Special Olympics
Illinois



Cancellations or postponements will be made on a case by case basis.

Ultimately, it is the discretion of the Plunge Director that a Polar Plunge be cancelled or postponed due to unsafe conditions (such as extreme cold, ice buildup, etc.). The below guidelines should be referenced when determining a Polar Plunge event's status.

COLD GUIDELINES

The event will be cancelled if the temperature forecasted or reached during the event is **-15°F**, actual temperature or with wind chill or the National Weather Service has issued a Wind Chill Advisory Warning, Winter Storm or Blizzard warning for the day of the event.

LIGHTNING GUIDELINES

If any of the following conditions exist, the event should be suspended and individuals moved to a safe location:

1. The facility lightning detection device provides an alert
2. If no lightning detection device then, the first flash of lightning, clap of thunder and/or other criteria such as increasing winds or darkening skies

Activity may not be resumed for at least 30 minutes after both the last sound of thunder and last flash of lightning.

BEST PRACTICES

Being proactive and monitoring weather conditions is necessary to the success of your event. The following standards should be used during your planning:

The Week of Your Polar Plunge

- Check the extended weather forecast at www.weather.gov
 - Use the **Hourly** forecast option the day before your event to better determine conditions during your Plunge timeframe
 - This will list actual temperature and "feels like" temperature that includes the wind chill factor
- If the forecast calls for thunderstorms on the day of your Plunge, arrange for a local committee member/local law enforcement agency/fire department/EMS to have on-site access to live radar
 - This will enable you to determine the duration of a storm and whether delaying the Plunge is an option
 - Designate a key committee member to monitor the live radar beginning two hours before your Plunge



The Day of Your Polar Plunge

- Designate a key committee member to monitor the weather forecast and live radar beginning two hours before your Plunge
 - A half-hour prior to your Plunge start time, if it is storming and radar indicates that the storm (with lightning and thunder) will persist for more than one hour past your Plunge time, cancel the Plunge portion of your event and proceed to your Post-Plunge party
 - If the radar indicates the storm will pass in less than one hour, proceed with a delayed start

Cancelling a Polar Plunge

If conditions are deemed too dangerous by the Plunge Director, the following steps should be taken:

- **If cancelling in advance of the event:**
 - Determine if the Polar Plunge can be postponed or hosted differently (i.e. swimming pools) before cancelling an event
 - If your Plunge is unable to be re-scheduled, you should plan to host some type of Plunge party to distribute sweatshirts, collect donations, present awards, etc.
 - Plunge Director to notify their Area Supervisor of cancellation; Supervisor to contact Marty Hickman and Jim Fitzpatrick (who will coordinate with Communications for website and social media updates)
 - Communicate changes to all registered Polar Plungers and volunteers
 - Work with Communications Department to notify local media of any changes
- **If cancelling the day of the event:**
 - Before making the cancellation announcement, assemble your Plunge committee, law enforcement and fire department officials
 - During this briefing, enlist this group's assistance with crowd control to safeguard against "renegade Plungers," as no one should enter the water once the event is cancelled
 - If possible, have the facility barrier access to the water before making the cancellation announcement
 - When making your announcement, be sure to highlight that "as always, the safety of our supporters, volunteers, spectators and staff is our number one priority and the current weather conditions have been deemed unsafe
 - Plunge Director to notify their local Supervisor of cancellation; Supervisor to contact Marty Hickman and Jim Fitzpatrick (who will coordinate with Communications for website and social media updates)
 - Work with Communications Department to notify local media of any changes