

Appendix B: Sport Field Playability & Responsibility Guidelines

Guideline Framework:

The City of Toronto recognizes there is a mutual interest shared between Park Staff and sport field user groups in maintaining turf standards and reducing injuries which may be caused by play during inclement weather. To ensure City-wide consistency in determining whether or not a field or diamond is fit for play, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PRF) Division has developed the following guidelines for use based on safety and maintenance concerns. These guidelines are a product of the efforts of PFR Customer Service Staff, Parks operations staff and volunteer sport field user groups.

Sport Fields

When determining field playability, the safety of participants is paramount, however substantial consideration must also be given to the potential damage to the turf and the length of time required for the field to recover.

When determining field playability, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Large areas of standing water on any part of the playing field are just cause for game cancellation.
- During the course of inspection, any visible water or sound ("squish") created while walking is an indication that the field is unfit for play or practice.
- Footprints and the collection of water around them is an indication that the field should be closed.
- If grass divots can easily be dislodged from the turf during play, the field should be closed.
- Frost or frozen areas are not playable until surface conditions have thawed and drained.
- Where synthetic turf fields are concerned, the above indicators also apply.

Ball Diamonds

Ball diamonds are unique from sports fields, but the approach to determining playability is similar. When determining field playability, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Visual ponding of water on the surface of the diamond indicates that the field should be closed.
- Water sponging up around permit users feet when walking on the diamond indicates that the field should be closed.
- Where there are large areas of mud that are clearly visible on the playing field, the field should be closed.

Other Important Information for Players

- Games should not be played when lightning is considered severe and close enough to the facility that it would pose an immediate danger to permit users.
- Players should never attempt to remove water from playing fields by using a broom to push the water towards a grassy area.
- Standing water may be removed by the use of a pump, sponge or by bailing with a container.
- The use of drying agents, such as Turface, is permissible. Care should be taken to apply drying agents as a light coat.

Weather Hazards-Environment Canada

When using outdoor facilities, permit holders should be aware of the potential hazards of inclement weather, particularly thunder and lightning. Permit holders are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all permit participants during potentially dangerous weather, including the postponement or cancellation of games or events if appropriate given the weather conditions.

For more information on inclement weather and safety, see:

<http://www.ec.gc.ca/meteo-weather/default.asp?lang=En&n=6C5D4990-1>

User Discretion

User discretion means that **all sport associations and groups have a greater responsibility** in determining whether to play or not to play on a sports field, based on the criteria identified above for field playability and weather safety. It is in the best interest of all players to ensure that fields are not used when conditions are unfavourable in order to prevent damage to the playing surface.

Note: Should a field not appear as "closed" on the facility listing on Permits web site, it is considered playable at the user's discretion.

Posting Notice of Cancellation

The City of Toronto will attempt to post cancellation notices on the City website no later than 3:00pm for all Class A & Premier Sport fields and diamonds. Facilities indicated as "closed" on the City web site are no longer playable for any age group until indicated otherwise by Parks Staff.

The only exception to this rule is if playing field conditions significantly change for the better. In this case, user discretion is applied, and the above guidelines must be adhered to prior to using the sports field.

If the City of Toronto fails to post or notify groups/organizations of cancellations by 3:00 pm, between Monday to Friday, and there are **no Parks staff on duty**, "user discretion" is applied and the above guidelines must be adhered to and applied prior to using the sports field. On Saturdays and Sundays where there are **no Parks staff on duty** "user discretion" is applied, and the above guidelines must be adhered to and applied prior to using the sports field.

Abuse of Guidelines

Groups and organizations that damage or abuse turf and surfaces will be assessed through the following process:

- **First Occurrence - Warning and Letter**

Following a first occurrence, City staff will contact the group/organization and provide a verbal and written warning. At this time the group/organization will have the opportunity to advise why this may have occurred and this occurrence will be documented and kept on file. If Parks staff assess that damages to the sport field are extensive, additional fees may be applied to the permit holder. In the circumstance where it is a spot rental, the group will have an alert placed on their

account for future requests, and a damage deposit will be obtained for future permits.

PFR will have the right of refusal for consideration of future permit use. In the event the group is a seasonal permit holder, the group may have additional fees applied, and an alert will be placed on the account.

- **Second Occurrence – Warning and Letter**

If a seasonal group/organization is found to once again cause damage to the sports field or surfaces, the group will receive a verbal and written final warning. Staff will advise the group/organization that future permit dates and facilities are affected, and they risk immediate cancellation of their current permit should a third occurrence take place.

City staff will perform an audit on this group periodically. If damage to the sports field be reported, additional costs may be incurred to the permit holder for all applicable damages.

- **Third Occurrence - Letter Notification/Removal**

Upon a third occurrence, City staff will advise verbally and in writing that the group is effectively immediately removed from the facility booking and the permit has been cancelled for the remainder of the season. Remaining permit fees will not be refunded. All field damages incurred will be charged to the organization for payment, due immediately.

Should groups wish to be allocated future time, a meeting will be required between the group/organization and City staff in advance of any consideration for the following year. Following review and discussions with this group/organization the City will have the right to refuse all future permit requests.

Misuse of Facilities

To report vandalism or misuse of sports fields to Parks staff, contact 311 and indicate the facility, playing field location/name, date, time, and concern. Staff will then forward the report to the appropriate Park Supervisor and Customer Service representative.

Inclement Weather Allowance

Seasonal permit holders, categorized as not-for-profit residents, who permit and commit to 16 consecutive weeks or more, will receive a 5% inclement weather discount off their permit total. This discount will be applied to seasonal permits at the beginning of the season and discounted off the total permit fee. Groups will only receive one discount per account.

Permit holders which have been allocated less than 16 weeks time have the option to contact Customer Service to reschedule games if time is lost due to inclement weather. Customer Service will attempt to accommodate these groups, however if alternate time cannot be found, the individual or group/organization will not receive a refund for lost time.

Individuals/groups with spot rentals will not receive a refund due to inclement weather; however they will have the option of rescheduling time with Customer Service, if time is available.



Set-up Allowance Standards

Seasonal permit holders, who book their permits prior to the start of the season and commit to 16 weeks or more, will be permitted to receive "Set-up Allowance" times attached to their permit, during the first half hour of their booking. This allotment of set-up time will be provided to groups previously approved by Parks and Customer Service for **game purposes only**. This additional time will not incur a charge if used for playing purposes.

