

## Guidelines for Staff making the decision about moving the session off site

### **Key Considerations:-**

- What has happened? Have new hazards **been** created and left by the previous weather?
- What is happening? Are new hazards **being** created now to which the site users are exposed?
- What is **going to** happen? Is the weather forecast to change for the better or continue as is or get worse and potentially create new hazards?

If new hazards have been created, are being created currently, or could imminently be created, the safest option is to move all staff and children to an alternative and safer location.

### **Sources of Weather Information:-**

- [www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/weather](http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather)
- [www.xcweather.co.uk](http://www.xcweather.co.uk)

### **Movement off site should be arranged when there is:-**

Strong gusting wind which is continually whipping up surface debris and making it uncomfortable to walk around the site and communicate

- (Communication and therefore control of group difficult, debris in eyes hazard, injury from play objects being caught by the wind)

Strong gusting winds which make it difficult for staff and children to walk around the site and could, or does, blow a child off their feet

- (Children unable to control their movements, trip hazard)

Damage to one of the bigger areas (tent, indoor space, facilities) + forecast for continuing strong or gusting winds

- (Chance of further injury due to debris becoming detached from the building)

Movement or damage to structures, buildings or play areas + forecast for continuing strong or gusting winds

- (Removal of dry warm retreat for staff and children, possible injury from further damage)

One or more large branches >3cm diameter and or >1m long has fallen to the ground + forecast for continued strong or gusting winds

- (Injury to site users from further branches falling)

Strong or gusting winds are forecast from opposite to usual direction and the tree branches are constantly in significant vigorous motion

- (Trees are adapted to the prevailing wind direction and can withstand stronger winds from this direction than others, greater likelihood of damage to trees and thus falling branches from unusual directions)

Newly snapped off branches are observed which are hung up (not yet fallen to the ground) in several trees on the site – whether or not continued strong or gusting winds are forecast. Where only a single branch has snapped off, the tree can be isolated e.g. taped off, but this is not practical for multiple trees.

- (Newly detached branches may not be well supported and could fall to ground)

A lightning storm is taking place with lightning striking the local area (e.g. with a short interval of 3 seconds or less between the flash and the sound)

- (Risk of lightning striking the site)

### **Professional advice should be sought when:-**

Multiple new small branches have fallen to the ground throughout the site (e.g. <3cm diameter and <1m long) + forecast for continuing strong or gusting winds

- (Injury to site users from further branches falling)

There are signs of newly exposed roots, newly exposed wood on / damage to existing roots, cracks in the soil surrounding a tree or a tree is newly leaning – indicating that it has changed angle or shifted position

- (A tree has loosened and may be in danger of falling over)

### **Arrangements for Early Child Collection by parents should be considered when:-**

Sustained heavy winds and snowfall are occurring – a continuous blizzard has been forecast (but not isolated heavy snow showers)

- (This situation does not increase the hazard exposure to children and staff on site if they are dry and warm in the indoor space but the off site hazards to the children and parents increase due to greater transport difficulties)

### **Moving off the Site – Practical Considerations**

- Minibuses should be used to evacuate the site. (Cars should not be used to remove children from the site unless the children are being carried in their parents own vehicle because for cars, an appropriate child seat is mandatory until they reach a height of 135cm or their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, whichever occurs first).
- Ideally the children should be returned to the site car park for collection by their parents at the allotted time. Although returning to the site will add effort to the Early Years operation, it eliminates the need to contact all parents to inform them of a new collection location and the confusion which can arise if some parents are informed of the new collection point and some do not receive the message in time.

### **Moving off the Site – Potential Destinations**

- Village Hall - this is the most ideal as it is attached to our site and has the amenities we need, but is sometimes in use by other community users.
- Another outdoor location. Should be individually risk assessed to be practical depending on issue. Still outside and potentially wet, animal waste and other site users possible
- Leisure Centre. Birthday rooms could be hired. These will need to be booked in advance and will incur a charge – but the environment is child friendly and has suitable toilet facilities etc.
- A local Service e.g. fire station, police station, vet, lifeboat station. Needs to be arranged well in advance.
- The library. Available at short notice (although warning the staff would be an advantage!) No cost but restricted opening hours.
- Local shops e.g. Aldi, Tesco, Homebase, Pets at Home. Generally friendly and helpful staff. Third parties always present, changing facilities etc not as good.

### **Conclusions**

It is extremely difficult to make fixed rules and to accurately quantify when the weather is suitable for continued use of the site or whether movement to another location is necessary. The top priority is always to ensure the health, safety and

welfare of the participants and staff. Ultimately the Manager (or delegated person in-charge) on the ground must consider the evidence and make the best possible judgement with the assurance of the support of the rest of the Stramash team as needed.