



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedures

6.15 Weather Related Response Limitations & Thresholds



WEATHER RELATED RESPONSE LIMITATIONS & THRESHOLDS

Effective: June 19, 2026
Scheduled Review: June 19, 2029
Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. PURPOSE

It is understood that during severe weather conditions operational modes may be modified, delayed, or restricted when conditions present an unacceptable risk to personnel or apparatus. The following thresholds provide guidance for transitioning to limited or defensive operations.

II. HIGH WIND

Sustained winds ≥ 50 mph: Evaluate response mode; restrict aerial operations and elevated work.

Sustained winds ≥ 60 – 70 mph or gusts ≥ 75 mph: Suspend response to non-life safety incidents; respond only to confirmed life-threatening emergencies.

Sustained winds ≥ 80 mph: Suspend all field operations except immediate life rescue when conditions allow safe access.

III. BLIZZARD / SNOWSTORM CONDITIONS

Snowfall rates ≥ 2 inches/hour with reduced visibility ($< 1/4$ mile): Limit response to priority calls only.

Total snowfall ≥ 12 inches with impassable roads: Implement “modified response”.

Whiteout conditions (visibility near zero): Temporarily suspend apparatus movement until visibility improves unless life safety is confirmed.

IV. ICE STORM CONDITIONS

Ice accumulation near or exceeding quarter inch (0.25): Increased response risk; slow response and prioritize calls.

V. FLOODING CONDITIONS

Water depth on roadways ≥ 6 inches: Do not drive through unless verified safe.

Moving (swift) water over roadways or infrastructure compromise: Suspend response to affected areas until specialized resources are deployed.

VI. LIGHTNING / SEVERE STORM ACTIVITY

Frequent cloud-to-ground lightning within 5 miles: Suspend non-essential exterior operations, e.g., roof operations, aerial work.



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VII. EXTREME COLD

Wind chills near or below -20°F: Initiate work/rest cycles and limit prolonged exterior operations.

VIII. OPERATIONAL MODIFICATIONS

When thresholds are met, prioritize calls as:

- A. Life-threatening (immediate response)
- B. Property-threatening (delayed or risk-based response)
- C. Service calls (deferred)

Utilize staging, remote size-up, or law enforcement verification when appropriate. Coordinate with the EOC for citywide prioritization and public messaging.

IX. AUTHORITY TO MODIFY RESPONSE

The fire chief, assistant chief, or battalion chief may implement or rescind citywide response limitations based on real-time conditions, intelligence, and risk assessment. The battalion chief shall immediately notify the assistant chief of operations and fire chief whenever modified response is implemented.

Each company officer and / or ambulance crew has a role for their safety. If not already in place, the company officer crew / ambulance crew shall immediately notify the battalion chief if they encounter conditions necessitating a modified response.