



### **6.8.1. Protecting our Fields**

#### **WHY DO WE CLOSE OUR FIELDS**

We close our fields after heavy or prolonged rain. We inspect the wetness of the surface and decide on both safety for players and potential damage to the fields if we keep them open. Any decision to close is made by technical staff in conjunction with groundsman at both Whites Hill College and Whites Hill Reserve facilities.

Our challenge is managing our fields in a way that enables as much play as possible over the 18–22-week season. With around 70 teams and 800 members we cannot afford to have our fields and turf condition compromised early in the season as repairing them becomes a much harder prospect and incurs more cost. We prefer to protect rather than repair!

We are often asked why we our fields are closed when the sun is shining. Our fields retain more wetness than you might expect. The sub-surface under our fields is heavy which means that water does not drain as quickly as we might like. This can often mean that we will keep our fields closed longer than you might think necessary.

Whites Hill College is a shared school oval, and we must abide by their advice around wet weather use as they manage the wear and tear on their oval for year-round use.

#### **GAME DAYS**

We have protocols we have to follow under Football Queensland competition procedures on game days. These usually include a specific timeframe for cancelling games which allows for player and official notification. We adhere to this as closely as possible, although living in Queensland means we can experience flash storms in this instance the officials will make the call before kick-off as to whether a game can go ahead or delayed due to lightning in the area.

#### **TRAINING DAYS**

We try to cancel training as early as possible as we are aware that many players travel from school/work to the fields. This is not always possible. We monitor storm warnings as late as feasible as we would prefer not to cancel training. This can sometimes lead to a late decision, close to the training session. In these instances, we would ask for your patience,

and we would ask that you make your own decision as to whether it is safe to travel depending on where you are as many of our storms can have significantly different outcomes even in small radius around the club.

In summary, if we have not cancelled training but you believe it is not safe to travel in, wait until the storm has passed and come later or miss the session altogether. Always send a message to your Team Coach and Manager so that they are made aware of your movements. Your safety is paramount.

## **NOTIFICATIONS**

We use social media and other club communication platforms for notifying field closures. We find this is the most efficient way of targeting the most members and coaches as quickly as possible.

We also post notices on Facebook and Instagram, and we update our Website Field Status, and communicate through dedicated club communication platforms.

## **AWAY GAMES**

Please refer to Football Queensland's Wet Weather portal to see the status of the away teams' grounds before departing to the fixture.

<https://footballqueensland.com.au/metro/metro-wet-weather/>

Clubs will often, but not always, contact each other as well as advise the associations. If we receive an early warning of field closures from other clubs, we will notify Team Managers and Team Coaches as soon as possible.

## **WHEN TO PROTECT OUR FIELDS**

The most important time to protect our fields are the rainy weeks. If the fields are closed, do not use them. Go somewhere else (the gym or stay at home) and practice stationary skill work, strength or balance exercises or follow your coach's instructions.

If the fields are open but the surface is still damp it is important that we train just off the field where possible. We rely on our coaches and our players to be proactive through managing training drills and field use in the best way possible to keep our fields in top condition.

## **LEARN FROM THE PROS**

They always respect the pitch. At training, or during pre-game they will often move the goals wide to the corner area of the field. Constant use of the goal area leads to significant wear and tear which is difficult to fix especially once the season is underway. Repetitive

field drills often lead to the same outcome. Off-field space can be used for these types of drills/sprints.

### **WHAT OTHER OPTIONS DO WE HAVE**

We are constantly looking at other options and are in discussions with local council too.

Cost is our biggest liability in moving to other centres (indoor or AstroTurf) in wet weather, as it the timing (everyone else is looking for the same options at the same time).

Where possible we will run video analysis or theoretical sessions for our SAP/NPL and FQPL teams or we will issue at home training advice.

We can assure you that we do not want to close our fields for training or games and do not take these decisions lightly. Closing for training means that our players might not follow the wet weather training advice and lose focus and conditioning especially if our closures are long. Closing our fields for games leads to a significant amount of extra work for us including notifications and organising new fixtures in an already packed season.

We thank you for your understanding and support.