

Utah Recess Guidance for Schools:

Frequently Asked Questions

Are school districts required by law to use the Recess Guidance?

- » No. The Recess Guidance was developed as a set of guidelines. It is not a law, mandate or policy. It was designed to help schools use air quality information when deciding whether to restrict outdoor physical activities. School districts have varying policies with regard to using the Guidance.

What is PM2.5?

- » Particulate matter (PM) refers to very small dust and soot particles. PM2.5 is the term used for particulate matter that is 2.5 micrometers or smaller in size and is expressed in $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ concentrations. This is so small that several thousand of them could fit on the period at the end of this sentence. Sources of PM2.5 include fuel combustion from automobiles, power plants, wood burning, industrial processes, and diesel powered vehicles. The highest levels of PM2.5 usually occur during the winter months.

Where can I check daily air quality levels?

- » Air quality conditions are monitored at various sites throughout the state. To check the current PM2.5 levels, visit www.air.utah.gov and click on "current conditions."
- » Additional resources for your use are listed below:
 1. Download the free UtahAir app and check air quality levels from the convenience of your phone or tablet device.
 2. Call DEQ to hear forecasts for all counties: 801-536-0072 or toll-free 1-800-228-5434
 3. Sign up for email alerts for air quality levels from DEQ: <http://air.utah.gov/>.
 4. Sign up for regular email alerts with specific details regarding recess recommendations and indoor recess ideas from the Utah Asthma Program: hl-recess-air-quality-subscribe@list.utah.gov.

What do I do if I have a "sensitive" student?

- » Parents, with the advice of their health care provider, should inform their school if they believe their child is part of a "sensitive" group who should have limited outdoor physical activity when the air quality is poor. Visit www.health.utah.gov/asthma for a sample letter for parents.

For more information visit: health.utah.gov/asthma

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How can a student with asthma (or other respiratory disease) be allowed to stay indoors during recess on poor air quality days?

- » It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to contact the school nurse and school administration to communicate their student's health needs. Some schools may require the parent/guardian to complete a health plan so school officials know when to keep the child indoors.

What school districts or schools have air quality policies?

- » Not all school districts are affected by air quality. Generally, only those with access to daily PM2.5 level reporting air monitoring stations in their areas are able to apply the guidance. Air quality monitoring station locations are found here: <http://www.airmonitoring.utah.gov/network/Counties.htm>.

Is the air inside schools really better than the air outside?

- » Yes. Three studies that address indoor versus outdoor air quality have been completed at two Utah elementary schools.
- » The first and second studies were done at Hawthorne Elementary in Salt Lake City, Utah from December 2004 – February 2005 and then again from December 2005 – February 2006. Results showed indoor air quality is significantly better than outdoor air quality.
- » The third study was done at Greenville Elementary in North Logan, Utah from September 2006 – April 2007. Results showed a 70% drop in PM2.5 levels inside the school versus outside on high pollution days. Additional studies at other Cache County schools confirm these results.

Is the Recess Guidance only for schools?

- » The Guidance was developed for schools and local health departments to help in decision-making about outdoor recess. However, the Guidance is based on national and Utah-specific research and can be useful for anyone with asthma or other respiratory diseases.

What can be done to improve the air quality near schools?

- » Reducing driving and bus idling on worsening air quality days may help. For information on bus idling reduction programs visit <http://epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/index> or visit www.cleanair.utah.gov for tips on how to improve the air quality in your community.

For more information visit: health.utah.gov/asthma