



GROUND WEATHER & LIGHT

Guidance Note for Umpires [in the recreational game]

Version 2.1

Date 1st January 2026

Version 2.1 replaces Version 1 Dated 1 January 2016 and reflects current thinking and changes to The Laws that have been announced since then. It also includes a clarification on the correct procedure after play has been suspended due to lightning.

The aim of this Guidance Note is to assist umpires to decide, under the MCC Laws of Cricket, if play should be allowed to start, continue or resume, solely as a consequence of weather or weather related conditions. Save where otherwise expressly noted, this Guidance Note does not address other situations when ground conditions may need to be assessed. The Guidance Note provides generic advice, and umpires will be required to use their judgement based upon the weather and ground conditions they experience.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges for cricket umpires at all levels of the game is the management of ground, weather and light as set out in Laws 2.7, 2.8 and 6.2. These laws require umpires to suspend play, or not to allow play to start or recommence, when, in their opinion, the conditions of ground, weather or light, or any other circumstances are either dangerous or unreasonable.

Law 2.7.2 states that “Conditions shall be regarded as dangerous if there is actual and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire”.

This is the standard that must be applied to all decisions relating to the ground, weather and light.

1.1 Purpose of this Guidance Note

This Guidance Note covers: 1) the **factors** that umpires take into account in assessing if conditions of ground, weather and light caused by the weather (“GW&L”) are dangerous or unreasonable and 2) the **procedures** that it is suggested umpires follow to make that assessment. However, no Guidance Note can anticipate the full range of conditions that umpires may face and the key test for all decisions is that quoted above from Law 2.7.2

The Laws of Cricket (2000 Code 4th Edition – 2010) marked a significant change in who carried the responsibility for all GW&L decisions.. It became the sole responsibility of the umpires to decide together whether conditions are fit for play.

The 2017 Code further requires that should either umpire consider the GW&L conditions to be dangerous or unreasonable, that play should not be allowed to resume or continue. If umpires disagree on this, the view of the umpire who considers conditions to be unfit shall always prevail.

1.2 What justifies the ECB ACO’s advice on this?

In 2015, a case was brought unsuccessfully against the ECB ACO in an English Court. The claimant, a fielder, alleged that the umpires had breached the duty of care owed to him in allowing play to start in conditions he alleged to be dangerous and were the cause of an injury he suffered while fielding. The judgement reviewed and commented upon the evidence, as to how and when the umpires had carried out their inspections and the tests they had applied in deciding whether and when play could commence. The judge held that the umpires owed a duty of care to the players to enforce the rules and laws of cricket. His judgement went on to describe the factors

to be considered in deciding whether the conditions were dangerous or unreasonable, as well as the procedures involved in making this decision. The judge endorsed the central test set out in the then Law 3.8(b) and the factors set out in detail in the then Law 3.9(d) of the 2000 Code (2003 edition) (see below). This Guidance Note draws upon the lessons learnt from this case. These two named Laws in the 2010 code are replaced by Laws 2.7 and 2.8 in the 2017 code.

At the outset, it should be noted that cases against umpires, and indeed sports officials generally, are rare. Whilst it is prudent to take stock of the position and provide guidance in light of the case referred to above (which was the first time such a case had been brought against ECBACO), there should be no cause for undue alarm in the umpiring or wider cricketing community. The case also highlights the benefits of having robust insurance cover in place (which is of course available to umpires through the ECB ACO).

1.2 The major points

The judgement makes clear that umpires **DO** owe a duty of care to the players to uphold and enforce the Laws of Cricket, the relevant playing conditions and the ECB Regulations. For GW&L decisions, this duty of care means the umpires must not allow play to take place if either of them concludes that the conditions are dangerous or unreasonable. This duty to look after the players' safety is not removed by club officials, or the players themselves, saying that they accept the risk. Duty of care means the umpires must carry out a thorough inspection of the GW&L conditions to ensure they are not dangerous (i.e. there is no actual and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire) or unreasonable (see 3.4 below) in order to determine whether play can take place.

Law 2.8.2 requires "the umpires shall immediately suspend play or not allow it to start or recommence, if either umpire considers the ground weather or light or any other circumstances are either dangerous or unreasonable"

2.0 PREPARATION

2.1 Introduction

In considering their GW&L decisions, umpires must not distance themselves from the support and advice that will be available to them at a given venue. For example, the benefits of a positive relationship with the ground staff could be invaluable in planning restarts and taking account of local weather conditions.

GW&L decisions rely on umpires demonstrating awareness, strong communication skills, teamwork and clear thinking – and applying them effectively and consistently. Preparation before the start of a match will help to ensure that all aspects of their decision-making clearly identify dangerous or unreasonable conditions, while at the same time without compromising safety, optimising playing time. Keeping the players informed before a 'situation' exists will improve their reaction (and the reaction of the spectators) if/when it does present itself. It is helpful if both umpires acquire and share as much knowledge as possible while preparing for any game, thus strengthening their working relationship and improving the effectiveness of their communication with the main stakeholders at all stages of their appointment.

Before the start of a match, it would be useful for the umpires to consult an up-to-date local weather forecast.

2.2 Clubs with ground staff, covers, etc.

If available, the ground staff will be - valuable allies. Forming a positive relationship with them on arrival at the ground will offer significant help if interruptions to the game occur. Demonstrating this working relationship to the players and club officials should mean the potential for stronger relationships throughout the umpires' appointment. As a guide, the following information should be gleaned from the ground staff:

- Local weather knowledge and the current forecast.
- The covering facilities available for the match and the level of support available to put the covers on and to remove them.
- The drying characteristics of the venue and any equipment/strategies available to assist, if necessary.
- The difficulties in pitch preparation, e.g. the weather effect, time, and other areas of concern.
- The mowing and rolling requirements for the match.

This information will assist the umpires in discussing relevant scenarios and making plans for eventualities that might arise. Such groundwork is never wasted: it will make it easier to implement the umpires' plans at the appropriate time and, if shared promptly and clearly with players/staff, should be accepted by all involved.

2.3 Clubs without ground staff and/or covers, etc.

Umpires in the recreational game will stand at grounds that range from Local-Authority-owned/prepared playing fields, which often have no additional facilities or support in the event of inclement weather, to clubs that have most of what would be expected at a County Ground.

The clubs and players at the lower levels of the game may be more willing to play despite poor weather conditions. For many of them, the match is their day a week of recreational sport, something they enjoy and do not want to give up unless it is absolutely necessary. However, at all levels, players may be keen to get the game underway depending upon the importance of the match to their team.

The challenge facing the umpires remains the same. If either umpire believes there is an actual and foreseeable risk of injury to the players or umpires, then the conditions are dangerous and play should not be allowed.

The preparation and planning mentioned above, albeit without ground staff or covers, still applies. It is still just as helpful: 1) to know what is likely to happen; 2) to know what the umpires' options might be; 3) for the umpires to work closely together; and 4) to listen to relevant comments of the captains and players.

3.0 ASSESSING GROUND CONDITIONS—FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Introduction:

This section of the Guidance Note deals with the **factors** to be considered in assessing whether ground conditions caused by the weather (i.e. as opposed to bad light or lightning, which are dealt with separately at the end of this Guidance Note) are dangerous or unreasonable.

Play should not start, resume or continue if conditions are dangerous or unreasonable. Conditions are not 'dangerous' only when the whole field of play (including the area immediately beyond the boundary over which fielders may need to pass as they endeavour to field or catch the ball) is free from any actual and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire.

3.2 Factors to be considered in assessing ground conditions:

In the case mentioned above, the judge referred to and adopted the following part of the then Law 3.9(d) of the 2000 Code (2nd Edition 2003) which was updated in the 2017 code as Law 2.7.42:

The fact that the grass and the ball are wet and slippery does not warrant the ground conditions being regarded as unreasonable or dangerous. If the umpires consider the ground is **so** wet or slippery as to deprive the bowler of a reasonable foothold, the fielders of the power of free movement, or the batters of the ability to play their strokes or to run between the wickets, then the conditions shall be regarded as so bad that it would be dangerous or unreasonable for play to take place”

From this it follows that factors to be considered by the umpires include the following:

3.2.1 Fielding Side

- Umpires are satisfied that the bowler’s run-ups, footholds and follow throughs appear to be safe, such that a bowler is able to deliver the ball without slipping or other risk of injury.
- The safety of the areas for the bowler’s feet in the take-off stride, the delivery stride and the follow through strides are particularly sensitive and important. These areas can be checked by each umpire with the foot, by firmly placing it on the ground to see if it slides or is otherwise unstable.
- The ground conditions do not appear to be such as to deprive the fielders of free movement when fielding, or attempting to field, the ball, i.e. they are free to move, turn and run at broadly full pace, without slipping or risking other injuries. Ground conditions can be tested in the same way as the areas for the bowler’s feet.
- There appears to be no surface or standing water anywhere on the playing area. Surface water is defined as water that can be seen on the surface of the ground; standing water is that visible when pressing one’s foot into soft ground.
- Similarly, there appears to be no surface or standing water on the area immediately beyond the boundary over which fielders may need to pass as they endeavour to field or catch the ball.
- Areas of water must be investigated and efforts made to eliminate them and any danger they pose. It may be possible to modify the playing area to eliminate the danger.

3.2.2 Batting Side

- There appear to be secure footholds around the popping crease so that the batter can receive a delivery and can play shots without fear of slipping or other injury.
- The ground appears to be firm enough for the batter to set off for a run without slipping or other injury.
- A batter can run safely between the wickets and turn for subsequent runs.
- In every case these areas can be tested in the same way as the areas for the bowler’s feet.

3.2.3. Both Sides

- There appear to be no areas of unfit ground that might cause a risk of injury to any player or umpire.
- Used pitches and their creases are often areas of particular concern that require careful attention and review.

3.3 The Pitch

Law 6.2 provides that the umpires are the sole judge of the fitness of the pitch for play and refers to Laws 2.7 and 2.8. Law 2.8 provides that all references to ground include the pitch. It follows that the test of whether the condition of the pitch is dangerous or unreasonable is the same as for the rest of the playing area i.e. is there an actual and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire?

Much of the time, a decision that says parts of the pitch pose the risks described above to batters, bowlers or fielders will apply with equal validity to the rest of the pitch and the way in which it may play.

However, there can be situations when, despite the rest of the playing area being safe and sufficiently dry, the pitch itself is dangerous. For example, if a defect in the covers has allowed a small amount of rain to create damp patches on areas of the pitch, on or short of a length; or if the pitch has not been properly prepared; or if earlier weather conditions, which have not affected the rest of the playing area, have resulted in a seriously problematic pitch. In every case, the umpires must determine whether the pitch poses an actual and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire, in this case principally the batters and the wicket-keeper standing up to or close to the stumps. For example, an unpredictable or steep bounce, or a pitch on which the ball repeatedly goes through the top surface and bounces dangerously. In assessing this, it is important to distinguish this situation from one when the pitch is merely unsatisfactory, i.e. it allows significant lateral movement, the ball stays low, or the pitch lacks carry. These things may be matters for the umpires' post-match report but, unless they pose a danger to the batters or fielders, they are not reasons to conclude that the pitch is dangerous or unreasonable.

It is often impossible to predict how a pitch will play and umpires always need to be vigilant in observing the behaviour of the ball after it pitches, not just at the start of an innings, or when conditions are less than ideal. The occasional unusual bounce does not mean that a pitch should be seen as dangerous but regular and/or excessive steepness of bounce may lead to this conclusion.

3.4 Exceptional Circumstances and Unreasonable Conditions

Law 2.7.1 provides that it is solely for the umpires together to decide whether conditions of GW&L OR exceptional circumstances mean it would be dangerous OR unreasonable for play to take place. Thus far, this Guidance Note has considered "dangerous" conditions and the test to determine them, as set out in the Laws. Clearly anything that is "dangerous", whether otherwise "reasonable" or "unexceptional", will preclude any play. What we will now consider is the meaning of "exceptional circumstances" or "unreasonable"

Law 32.7.2 states that "conditions shall not be regarded as either dangerous or unreasonable merely because they are not ideal. The fact that the grass and ball are wet does not warrant the ground conditions being regarded as unreasonable or dangerous"

Law 2.7.3 provides that: "*Conditions shall be regarded as unreasonable if, although posing no risk to safety, it would not be sensible for play to proceed*".

That it is raining heavily does not necessarily mean the conditions have become dangerous, although they may have done so, but umpires (and players) would consider such conditions to be unreasonable and would expect umpires to suspend or not to start/resume play.

There could be other situations where it would be dangerous for play to proceed- (e.g. a large swarm of bees invading the field of play) or unreasonable but not dangerous – (e.g. waiting for paramedics to come to administer aid to a player who has collapsed on the field).

4.0 PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN MAKING GROUND INSPECTIONS

This section of the Guidance Note deals with the **procedures** involved in deciding whether ground conditions caused by the weather (as opposed to bad light or lightning, which are dealt with separately at the end of this Guidance Note) are dangerous or unreasonable.

Following every interruption for weather or after every delayed start to a match, the umpires **must** inspect the ground conditions **prior** to any play taking place. There must never be any assumption about the conditions being suitable for play.

4.1 The Inspection

Before allowing play, umpires must, in addition to considering the factors above (at paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, conduct a careful inspection of the playing conditions affecting the whole of the playing area (including the area immediately beyond the boundary over which fielders may need to pass as they endeavour to field or catch the ball). The inspection should be carried out no faster than at a reasonable walking pace (i.e. walk over the playing area including that immediately beyond the boundary).

Where play is underway, the umpires must be vigilant and observant in looking for signs of dangerous or unreasonable conditions and consult between themselves as necessary. What either of them may have regarded as safe earlier may have become unsafe – and they need to react promptly.

Each umpire must arrive at their own conclusions on whether the conditions are dangerous or unreasonable. The way in which the inspection is carried out can be decided by the umpires. They may walk together or separately, provided that each arrives at their own decision, taking into account the conditions in the whole playing area (including the area immediately beyond the boundary over which the fielders may need to pass as they endeavour to field or catch the ball). A systematic approach is however recommended, taking in all of the areas causing particular concern. This will allow umpires to draw comparisons at times when the ground is not fit on the first or subsequent occasion and to assess any improvement that has been made in the conditions in that same area since prior inspections. Whilst the focus of this Guidance Note is weather, such an approach to inspection may also identify other risks, such as broken glass, hidden objects, divots etc.

Each umpire should then arrive at their own decision on the fitness of the conditions and advise their colleague of their conclusion.

Throughout all inspections, umpires must be mindful that every venue, at every level of the game, has different characteristics and support available. This range emphasises the need for all umpires do their homework before the start of a game so that any surprises are kept to a minimum.

If there are particular areas of concern following an inspection, the ground staff, if available, should be informed and a plan to try to address the problem should be agreed.

Once both umpires have decided the conditions are fit for play, they need to set a time at which play can start and then work closely with any ground staff to ensure this timeframe is met. They should always allow enough time for ground staff (or those responsible) to have the ground ready and for the relevant officials to complete any overs or revised target calculations. Once a restart has been agreed, the umpires shall inform the captains and the scorers.

Following an inspection, the umpires will agree together the next course of action. As noted above, play should not start, resume or continue unless **both** umpires conclude that in their opinion conditions are neither dangerous nor unreasonable.

4.2 Placement and removal of covers

It seems obvious that, if the ground staff is not present and the placement and removal of the covers is left to the players, it is essential that they are supervised by the umpires. What is perhaps not so obvious is that it is good practice for this supervision by the umpires to occur even if the ground is staffed by a full-time support team. The umpires are responsible for trying to ensure that covers are placed to maximise their efficiency and that pipes are laid so that the water runs onto the outfield, where it can best soak away, rather than onto the square. Supervision of the removal of covers is also critical to avoid spillage.

Particular care is required when flat sheets are to be removed. If possible the water on these should be soaked up prior to moving them. It is always helpful to arrange for as many people as possible to assist and to raise the two sides to trap any remaining water on the sheet, before dragging this to somewhere where the water can be drained away without affecting the playing area unduly.

4.3 Frequency of Inspections

Law 2.8.3 says, when there is a suspension in play, it is the responsibility of the umpires to monitor conditions and make inspections as often as appropriate, unaccompanied by the players or officials. It is therefore helpful to remind the captains of this law in advance, rather than have half the players troop out after the umpires, who then have to turn them back.

Umpires are to remain vigilant when play is suspended or has not started. They are to keep one eye on the weather so that the conditions can be inspected as soon as they look to have improved. The captains and ground authorities should be kept informed of their findings. If they decide the conditions are not fit, a further inspection will be arranged, and the captains and scorers notified of the time.

4.4 Recording decisions

A record must be made of the time of inspections, the umpires' conclusions to those inspections, and the times the umpires decide to commence or suspend play. These records should be retained for a period of one year from the date of the match. If the umpires are required to complete a report on the match, this information can also usefully be recorded here. The records can include notes about the relevant views expressed by others, along with clear indication that the deliberations between the umpires and inspections carried out by the umpires addressed such views.

If any player is injured during play, and the cause of such injury may reasonably be considered or suspected to have arisen from the ground conditions, it is recommended that, as soon as possible, a record be made by the umpires as to the steps they took in regard to relevant inspections and decisions relating to the playing conditions.

5.0 DECISION MAKING BY UMPIRES IN RELATION TO GW&L

5.1 Umpires being seen to work together

Play must not be allowed to start, recommence or continue if either umpire concludes the conditions are unreasonable or dangerous.

Although umpire should discuss their individual tolerance to these matters before play commences, when they arrive at differing conclusions relating to the prevailing conditions, it is important they are seen to act in unison. This requires the umpire who concludes play is possible to support their colleague who concludes it is not, without demonstrating to the other participants in the match they hold a different view.

5.2 What if there is only one umpire?

If there is only one qualified umpire at a game (qualified, for this purpose, means a current, full member of the ECB ACO), and the other end will be handled by a player or a club official, **the qualified umpire should take responsibility for deciding on GW&L issues**. This does not however mean the qualified umpire should not listen to the opinion of others.

6.0 DEALING WITH CLUB OFFICIALS, CAPTAINS AND PLAYERS – AND SOME REALWORLD SITUATIONS

6.1 The State of the Game

When there is a break in play because of the weather, umpires are often faced with a situation whereby the winning side is keen for play to re-start and the losing side does not want to re-start. In this situation, some players will try to influence the umpires, being constantly in their ear. If this happens, umpires should inform their captain of what is happening and ask them to deal with it.

When considering whether to suspend play or whether play should start or resume, umpires cannot take into account the state of the game. If conditions deteriorate to the extent that either umpire considers they have become dangerous or unreasonable, they must suspend play immediately. They should not wait until the end of the over; they should not delay because the batting side only needs a few runs to win or the fielding side needs only one more wicket.

Situations will arise that will challenge umpires' decision-making, especially in key matches towards the end of a season or in the later stages of a cup competition. It is important that the umpires use the same criteria they have used throughout the season to decide whether play will start, continue or resume.

6.2 Dealing with a Captain's Refusal to Play

Law 16.3 makes clear that, If one team refuses to play, the umpires shall award the game to their opponents.

In the recreational game, when GW&L issues arise, it is often the case that one team will want to play (usually because they think that they might win) and one team will not (usually because they fear they will lose).

Umpires must determine whether play is possible based entirely on external conditions, not on the state of the match. However, once they decide that play can begin or continue, they will often be lobbied by clubs, captains or players, who will argue the decision is wrong.

Some of this lobbying is inevitable and has to be accepted and managed sensibly, principally by the umpires being firm and objective in explaining their thinking. However, if their doing so does not resolve the situation, it is important the umpires adopt a clear plan if they believe one team is indeed refusing to play. The following 7-step process is suggested as a way to handle this situation.

- 1) The umpires cannot force the reluctant captain to have his team play and should be careful not to coerce them.

- 2) The umpires can remind the captain calmly the decision that the conditions are neither dangerous nor unreasonable is theirs, and theirs alone, to make.
- 3) The umpires can briefly address any issues raised by the captain (e.g. the ball will get wet and slippery).
- 4) If the captain persists, the umpires should ask the specific question, 'are you refusing to play?'
- 5) Assuming the answer to 4) is affirmative, the umpires should explain that the Laws provide that a captain's refusal to play will have consequences. The umpires will follow the procedures laid down in Law 16.3 and will award the match to the other team.
- 6) The umpires can point out that other consequences may arise under the Playing Conditions, which the captain may wish to consult before arriving at their decision.
- 7) The umpires should give the reluctant captain a specified amount of time to change his mind. Once that time has elapsed, play will either continue or the umpires invoke the sanctions in Law 16.3 (unless the Playing Conditions provide to the contrary) and award the match to the opposing side.

6.3 Handling players' desire to play on when conditions are dangerous

It is not uncommon for captains and players to say they would like play to start, continue or resume, even though they accept the umpires' conclusions that conditions are dangerous. They will often tell the umpires that they also accept the risk of injury to themselves and their players.

This is a difficult situation for umpires. The umpires together should follow the procedure below.

- 1) The umpires can calmly remind the captains that the decision not to allow play is theirs, and theirs alone, to make under the Laws and that they owe a duty of care to the players.
- 2) The umpires should advise the captains and ask them to tell their players that they have concluded there is a foreseeable risk of injury to the players or umpires, i.e. the conditions are dangerous.
- 3) The umpires should abandon the match withdraw from the ground and record and report their decision to the appropriate authority.

7.0 RAIN

The Laws do not prohibit cricket being played when it is raining, provided it is not dangerous or unreasonable.

Some competitions include specific provisions as to what must happen in the event of rain. Others have agreed local practices to ensure all matches in a competition are treated equitably. Umpires should know if either of these apply to the match and act accordingly. Excepting that, irrespective of these, if either considers the conditions are dangerous or unreasonable, play shall not start, resume or continue.

In the interests of optimising playing time appropriately, when conditions are not dangerous or unreasonable, it is difficult to provide guidance about continuing to play or starting or resuming play if it is raining. This has to be a judgement call made by the umpires and based on the situation at the time.

Each umpire has their own level of tolerance for playing in rain. It is vital for umpires to discuss this matter before the match. But as soon as either of them decides the conditions are dangerous or unreasonable play must be suspended. It is important to ensure the players do not see umpires disagree.

Once the umpires decide to allow play to take place, they must be vigilant and attentive to the actions of all players. They must suspend play immediately, as soon as either concludes that the ground conditions have deteriorated to a point where they have become dangerous or unreasonable.



Umpires should anticipate that the fielding side may complain about the condition of the ball. If using a towel does not solve the problem, they should consider taking appropriate action under Law 4.5 (Ball lost or becoming unfit for play). Umpires should have confirmed the availability of a suitable supply of spare balls as part of their pre-match duties.

8.0 THE ECB'S "GET THE GAME ON" INITIATIVE

The ECB initiated a wide-ranging programme in the 2014 season, aimed at increasing the number of cricket matches played each year. This programme covered many concerns (in addition to GW&L) that caused matches not to be played.

In relation to GW&L, Get the Game On calls upon those people it refers to as "Match Day Decision Makers" to work together to maximise the possibility and amount of play that can be achieved when the weather intervenes. It says umpires, captains, ground staff and other club officials comprise this core team. This programme, like this Guidance Note, also stresses the need for preparation and use of all of the available resources to do everything that can be done appropriately to get/keep the match underway.

Get the Game On does **NOT** in any way override the fundamental Laws of cricket, under which the umpires alone must decide whether conditions are dangerous or unreasonable. Where either umpire considers this to be so, no play should occur while these conditions continue.

9.0 LIGHT

Umpires are called upon to make a judgement as to whether the light is suitable for play to start, continue or resume. The test is the same as that for ground conditions caused by weather: is it dangerous, i.e. is there an actual and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire? The same degree of care is needed to reach the decision. With light, as with ground conditions, the umpires should err on the side of caution. Before play can start, continue or resume, both umpires must agree the light is sufficient that conditions are not dangerous or unreasonable.

Once it becomes clear that the players and/or the umpires are/will be unable to pick up the flight of the ball (taking into account its pace) soon and clearly enough, the conditions should be regarded as dangerous and play should be suspended or should not start or resume. For example, if the bowler's end umpire begins to have difficulty in following the path of the ball as it reaches the striker, that should trigger a careful consideration of the light conditions.

To come to a conclusion about the suitability of the light conditions, both umpires should be mindful of their own ability to view the ball from their normal positions. They should also watch the reactions of the batters and fielders carefully, taking into account the pace of the bowling.

10.0 LIGHTNING

Umpires may be called upon to make judgements as to whether the presence of lightning renders it unsuitable for play to start, continue or resume. The test is the same as that for ground conditions caused by weather: is it dangerous, i.e. is there an actual and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire? The same degree of care is needed in reaching the decision. With lightning, as with ground conditions, the umpires are to err on the side of caution. Before play can start, continue or resume both umpires must be satisfied that conditions are such that it is not dangerous or unreasonable.

The following guidelines should be used to assist the umpires with their duties in the event of lightning, in order to ensure safety:

- If, at any point during the match, the threat of lightning, whether actual or perceived, comes to the attention of either of the umpires, the umpires should follow the protocol outlined below and agree a course of action that takes into account all factors outlined therein.
- If on the field, either umpire decides that the lightning threat is imminent, they should advise their colleague and they should both instruct the players to leave the field of play immediately in a safe and orderly manner, with the umpires, and to relocate to a secure and safe location.
- In order to resume play, both umpires must agree that the threat has passed and it is safe to do so, taking into consideration all relevant information.
- In making decisions regarding the suspension, resumption or start of play due to the threat of lightning, actual or perceived, the umpires may refer to any meteorological data that may be available.

When making decisions regarding starting, continuing or resuming play, the umpires must err on the side of caution and must prioritise safety over and above the optimisation of play, irrespective of the state of the match. If there is any doubt as to the likely threat of lightning, the umpires should not start or should suspend play; if play is already suspended, they should not resume play until they have agreed that the threat has passed.

The following 40/30 protocol should be considered by the umpires:

- Play should not start or resume, or should be suspended and shelter immediately sought, when there are 40 seconds or less between the flash of lightning and the associated thunderclap.
- It is generally safe for umpires to carry out an inspection to determine if play can recommence a minimum of 30 minutes after the final flash of lightning or clap of thunder has been seen or heard.
- It might be possible to start or resume play earlier than 30 minutes but only if it is clear and agreed by both the umpires that the storm has moved on and there is no threat of lightning.
- For the sake of clarity, the final decision remains in the hands of the umpires.

11. SUMMARY

The significance of the management of ground, weather and light places demands on the umpires irrespective of the level of the game in which they are involved. Umpires need to work effectively together to ensure the players are confident they are handling these situations to the best of their combined ability. Umpires should always be guided and remember that;

- The decision on whether play can take place is the responsibility of the umpires alone who owe a duty of care to the players.
- There is no substitute for thorough pre match preparation and for umpires agreeing between themselves how all GW&L matter will be handled.
- Building strong working relationships with all available key personnel is essential if playing time is to be optimised.
- The need for the umpires to be ready for all foreseeable possibilities and more.
- In determining whether play can take place regard must be had to the **factors** involved in assessing conditions and the **procedures** to be followed in assessing conditions and carrying out inspections .
- Where the umpires are in doubt as to the safety of the playing conditions, they should err on the side of caution and not allow play.



- The need for the umpires to make and retain appropriate records.
- In the event of lightning, regard should be had to the protocol governing this

And WHENEVER –

either umpire considers there is an actual and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire, play should not take place

NOTE: The information in this Guidance Note is correct to the best of the ECB and ECBACO's knowledge at the time of its publication. It is, however, only intended as guidance and, to the fullest extent possible in law, neither the ECB or the ECBACO (or indeed any other party involved in its production) accept any responsibility for loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of material contained in this Guidance Note. Further, whilst the ECB and ECBACO recognise that umpires have a duty of care and the importance of participant safety generally, nothing in the content of this Guidance Note is intended to raise the standard of that duty of care (in law) or make cricket as a whole more subject to litigation.