

WCOA Emergency Action Plan

The guidelines and mechanics covered here will review several aspects of game administration as it relates to the responsibilities of officials in the event of irregularities, fights, disturbances or weather related incidents. The purpose is to create a set of standardized guidelines for officials to follow and such policies are to be adhered to for all contests at all levels assigned by the WCOA as applicable.

Prior To Game Time

Arrival

Officials will arrive at the game site no less than 90 minutes prior to kick off for varsity contests, no less than 45 minutes prior to kick off for JV contests and no less than 30 minutes prior to kick off for youth contests.

Parking

All officials should park in designated parking areas as instructed by the schools or leagues. Schools should provide security and have an administrator greet the officials and escort them to their dressing room.

It is recommended that you back into the parking space and have your keys with you in the event you need to make a quick exit after the game.

Crews must remember to make sure that the ECO gets to their car safely as well. Officials who insist on parking in areas not designated by the schools take personal responsibility for getting to their car without security.

Addressing Concerns

If a safe location for parking is not provided, a secure dressing facility is not available, security is not present, etc. then those issues should be included in the game reports filed with the county and/or brought to the attention of the VP of football.

Pregame

Crew Conference

The entire crew will have a formal pregame conference prior to any varsity or JV contest. Appropriate mechanics and responsibilities are to be reviewed during this conference

Sportsmanship Announcement

The referee will provide the ECO with the WCOA/FHSAA sportsmanship announcement to be given to the stadium announcer to be read prior to the game. This announcement should also be made at various times during the game as well.

On Field

The referee and umpire will meet with the head coaches, administrators, and security personal prior to kick off.

The wing officials will meet with the coaches and sideline personal and review that all personnel on the sideline must remain behind the 2 yard belt at all times.

The wing officials should seek the help of the administrators if necessary to keep the sideline clear and remove any disruptive or unauthorized individuals.

The back judge will patrol the area between the 45 yard lines (no fly zone) to make sure that each team stays out of this region.

When a 7 man crew is used, the pregame positioning will be that outlined by the CCA / FHSAA 7 man mechanics.

The referee or his designee should meet with the band director during the pregame and assure that the national anthem is conducted with no less than 4 minutes on the game clock (prior to the coin toss). The band should also vacate the center of the field to leave a region for the coin toss to be conducted when the game clock hits zero (at least 3 minutes prior to kick off).

During The Game

Preventive Officiating

Officials should constantly and consistently engage in preventive officiating by talking to the players and coaches from the start of the game to relay problems and take corrective measures. Address any issues quickly.

Be aware of verbal comments and body language that show signs of aggression. Never let players or coaches get in anyone's face and defuse these events quickly. Also, officials should get into the side zones promptly when plays end up in the bench areas to escort players out and make a presence to keep unsportsmanlike comments and actions from developing.

Officials should swiftly address on field demonstrations, acts of intimidation and taunting behavior by immediately penalizing and defusing such acts. The antics of the NCAA and NFL have no place in high school football.

Hillsborough Count Public Schools has a No Profanity Rule which should be adhered to, with offenders immediately ejected for violating the policy. The concept is to address the little problems rapidly before they escalate into bigger ones.

Official, ECO and Chain Crew Conduct

The ECO is not to address or discuss the appropriateness of penalties, enforcements or make critiques of the officiating crew with any member of the press box (announcers, coaches, media, parents, etc.).

The ECO can interpret official signals, relay factual information to the announcer and provide materials to the announcer as provided by the referee, however, that is all.

All officials, the ECO and chain crew members will NEVER give interviews, post on social media or discuss in any manner game incidents with the media, coaches, spectators, press box personnel, family and friends.

Announcer Conduct

Stadium announcers will refrain from criticizing or commenting on the officials or the calls they have made. This includes verbal comments or musical clips intended to ridicule the officials, raise doubt about their calls, belittle an officials conference, etc.

The same restrictions on the announcer apply regarding criticizing the coaches, teams or opposing fans.

If the stadium announcer will not stop criticizing the officiating crew, the coaches, the teams or the opposing fans, the referee will direct the administrators to have the announcer removed from their position and if necessary removed from the stadium if they continue to be disruptive.

Non-Players' Conduct

Being on the sideline or in the stands is a privilege and not a right. Anyone on the sideline, around the field or in the stands who wishes to incite the teams or crowd, disrupts the game, displays unsportsmanlike behavior or encourages violence should immediately be removed from the stadium.

Wing officials must be careful to not let their sidelines get overloaded with people. As the game goes on, alumni, boosters, club members, parents and others often want to migrate down onto the field. Wing officials should ask the administrators and security present to keep these people in the stands and away from the field.

On Field Brawl Among Players

An official should immediately throw their flag and blow their whistle to draw the attention of their crew members when hostility between players erupts. In the event of a brawl on the field, the officiating crew should retreat from the immediate action and begin recording the numbers of the players and any others coming off the bench to participate in fighting.

It is recommended that officials not touch the players or coaches in any manner other than to protect themselves against harm.

Any coaches or administrators coming off the bench area and onto the field should be attempting to break up the fight and not become part of it.

Official Mechanics During An On Field Brawl

Referee and Umpire – Stay in the middle of the field and monitor the action taking place between the 9 yard marks.

Head Linesman and Line Judge – Work to keep players and non-players on the sideline and off of the field. Help to recruit the assistance of coaches, administrators, security/police to aid in breaking up the fight on the field.

Back Judge – Assist in any area you feel the other officials may need help.

ECO – Step away from the window of the press box and remain out of sight. Remove your official's hat and shirt if necessary (you should always have on an undershirt). If you feel threaten, you should not attempt to leave the press box until security personnel can escort you down. If there is no press box, retreat to a safe area as soon as possible.

Remind anyone filming the game to continue to record the action, for they are to film the entire brawl.

Chain crew – You may assist the head linesman in keeping players and personnel on the sideline.

Side Judge and Field Judge (for 7 man) – Carry out the same duties as the Head Linesman and Line Judge.

ALL officials – Be alert to record the numbers of all players and non-players involved in the disturbance and make notes of their individual actions.

If the game is a FHSAA event, an AT6 report must be filed with the FHSAA immediately and the state contacted by phone immediately using the number on the website form. Present just the facts in the report and offer no opinions or explanations.

FHSAA (352) 372-9551 Ext. 300

If a Hillsborough County Public School is involved in the game, the director of athletics must be contacted immediately by phone and the incident brought to their attention.

Lanness Robinson Cell (813) 240-0834

For youth games, league rules should be followed regarding the event and it should also immediately be reported to the youth booking commissioner.

For all such serious events at any level, the VP of football and the President of the WCOA must be contacted immediately as well.

Attacks Against Officials

If threatened or attacked, an official should immediately throw their flag and blow their whistle to draw the attention of their crew members. All officials should come together as a group and summon the help of the administrators and police. If an official is being confronted, a second, third or more officials should come to his fellow official's aid.

If an official is wearing a lanyard style whistle, take the lanyard off from around your neck to avoid having someone try to choke you.

If the hostility escalates, the officiating crew should retreat to a safe location and seek an escort from security or police present. If the officials do have to leave the stadium area, leave together as a crew and do not forget about the ECO.

Have security or police sent to escort the ECO from the press box.

The referee will inform the schools or league that the game will not continue unless order is restored and proper security is provided.

If necessary, the stadium can be ordered cleared except for the teams, coaches, administrators and police prior to resuming the game.

If a safe environment can not be provided for the game to continue, the referee can suspend the game at the point it came to an end and have it continued at a later date or can declare the game over at that point. In all cases, the safety of the officials, players, coaches and spectators is foremost.

If the game is a FHSAA event, an AT6 report must be filed with the FHSAA immediately and the state contacted by phone immediately using the number on the website form. Present just the facts in the report and offer no opinions or explanations.

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Crowd Attacks Against Coaches, Teams, Fellow Crowd Members

The same procedures will be used by the crew as outlined above.

The ECO should instruct the announcer to give a public address that fans who leave the stands, enter the field and/or participate in the disturbance are subject to expulsion from the stadium, arrest or both.

Officials should never get involved in the events occurring the stands and should address only problems on the field.

The referee will notify the administrators that the game will be suspended until order can be restored. The teams should be encouraged to return to their locker rooms for their safety until order is restored.

If a safe environment can not be provided for the game to continue, the referee can suspend the game at the point it came to an end and have it continued at a later date or can declare the game over at that point. In all cases, the safety of the officials, players, coaches and spectators is foremost.

Lightning and Weather Concerns

When thunder and lightning are present in the area, a game must be delayed or suspended. If an athletic director, administrator, coach or official wants the game suspended, then the game will be suspended. The utmost concern is always for the safety of the players, coaches, officials and fans.

The accepted standard is that play will not resume until 30 minutes have passed since thunder and lightning were last recorded.

Per the FHSAA, if a school has lightning detection equipment, then that device can be used in the decision making process as to when it is safe to resume the game. The 30 minute rule, however, still applies.

Any equipment used must be in close proximity to the field and must be monitored by an adult at all times. While opinions vary greatly on the range to be used, the most commonly accepted standard is that no lightning be detected in a 10 mile radius from your location for 30 minutes before play can resume.

If a field is unplayable, underwater, or represents a hazard to the players due to extremely inclement weather, then the game should be delayed or suspended as well.