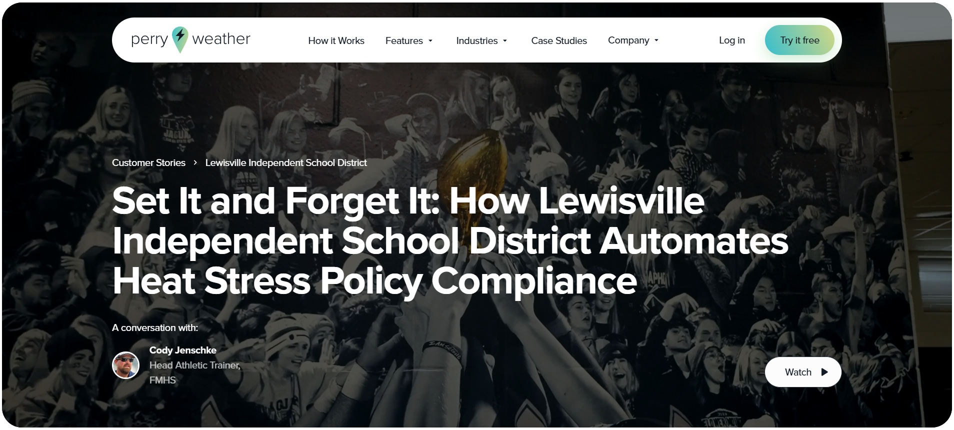

Set It and Forget It: How Lewisville Independent School District Automates Heat Stress Policy Compliance

A conversation with:

Cody Jenschke
Head Athletic Trainer,
FMHS

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ABOUT

Lewisville Independent School District (LISD) is located north of the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) metroplex, where Texas summer heat and lightning storms are a constant threat to outdoor activities. The weather can change quickly across even a small area, and since LISD spans across 127 miles and encompasses over 50 schools, hyper-local weather data is a literal life-saver.

LOCATION

Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas

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Cody Jenschke
Head Athletic Trainer

Just north of the Dallas-Ft.Worth airport (DFW) in North Texas, Lewisville Independent School District (LISD) is the 94th largest school district in the country. It covers 127 square miles and encompasses 13 different cities around the DFW metroplex – that’s over 50 schools!

The weather in DFW is notoriously volatile and changes quickly – storms can come out of nowhere and the Texas summer heat is brutal. LISD schools have to be able to respond quickly to changes in the weather that may impact outdoor sports, practices and other student activities.

Keeping track of the weather changes and keeping kids safe from weather is top-of-mind for Cody Jenschke, Head Athletic Trainer at Flower Mound High School, one of the LISD schools.

Jenschke really cares about his students. When asked about his favorite part of the job, he doesn’t hesitate: The relationships he builds with the students, coaches and families.

He’s worked for LISD for 19 years, and has the privilege of keeping up with families in the community as they grow: younger siblings, weddings, and their future careers. (Fun fact: He was the high school athletic trainer for one of our very own Perry Weather employees!)

His least favorite part of the job? “Controlling the uncontrollable.”

We sat down with Jenschke to understand the unique weather challenges facing LISD schools, how he keeps his athletic program compliant with heat stress policies and how he keeps kids safe in the scorching Texas heat.

The challenge: Stay compliant with heat stress policies, while following common sense

Jenschke’s primary responsibility seems simple at first glance: keep students safe.

“We make sure we have the safest atmosphere at any time.”

The reality is that he’s constantly juggling multiple facets of the job: nutrition, strength and conditioning, concussion safety, stretching, rehab, education and (you guessed it) preventing heat stress and remaining compliant with heat stress policies.

LISD follows activity guidelines from the University Scholastic League (UIL), which sets the standards for almost all athletic, musical and academic contests for public primary and secondary schools in the State of Texas.

UIL has a heat stress policy based on the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) readings, which measure heat stress on the body. Once the WBGT reaches a dangerous zone, outdoor practices must be modified (for example, remove football pads or increase water breaks) or even cancelled.

Before using Perry Weather, Jenschke was using a manual Kestrel WBGT device to collect these measurements, but using a Kestrel came with a lot of issues, including that it requires a 30-minute reading period.

“In the past, we set the manual WBGT reader out on the football field on a tripod. It meant constant monitoring to find out what zone we’re in and how long we’ve been in this zone. We would spend a lot of time going back and forth, reading the temp and making sure that we’re staying in these specific zones. And have to figure out, what can we do in these zones? What can we not do?”

Following this process meant a lot of manual work for Jenschke. It just didn’t make sense.

Jenschke and his team needed a solution to help them stay compliant with policies, while also following common sense and making sure they don’t drop the ball on other responsibilities.

The solution: Automating heat stress compliance with Perry Weather

Within his Perry Weather app, Jenschke can configure the WBGT settings so that they’re aligned with the policies set forth by UIL. The onsite weather station contains a Black Bulb sensor that measures WBGT at the exact location where activities will occur, taking temperature, wind speed, solar position and humidity into account.

“WBGT takes all these components into consideration so we can make a good judgement call on whether we need to modify activities or if we should be outside at all.”

The Perry Weather app dashboard displays a “daily policy risk” section that Jenschke can check at the beginning of the day, to be ready for scheduling changes later.

But he doesn’t have to keep checking it throughout the day.

Once the WBGT temperature readings hit a dangerous zone that requires modifications, Jenschke and his team receive an automated push notification with a customized message letting people know what changes need to occur.

Even better, the historical WBGT readings are logged in 15-minute increments, so there’s no need for manual recordings.

For Jenschke, this is a game-changer: “The decisions that we make need to be accurate, and they need to be real time.”

It’s a game-changer for parents, too: “The Texas heat can be tough, and we may be stuck on whether we can or can’t practice, but it’s good to know if we are out there in the heat, parents know that we have a system that’s making real-time, accurate information to be able to safely make decisions for their kids.”

Jenschke shares more Perry Weather features that help him be more effective in his job.

Automated alerts keep everyone in-the-know

LISD is a big school district made up of over 50 schools and even more coaches, athletic trainers, and administrators making weather-related decisions throughout the day.

That means that when activities need to be modified for the weather, there’s a lot of people to notify!

Jenschke felt this stress even just at his high school: “Whenever we would make a change, I was having to pull out my cell phone, call, text, make sure that everybody using outdoor facilities is under control and doing what we want them to do. Everything from football practice, the band out there on the concrete, and the baseball softball fields across the street.”

With automated push notifications, all users get the same notification, at the same time. They can either proactively check the app, or get notified when a change needs to be made.

Jenschke and his team can customize the messages with specific directions unique to his school location, while another school can have a different plan based on the facilities available and needs of the students.

“All I had to do was check my Apple watch when it dinged and it told me exactly where we needed to be, how long we needed to be there, and what WBGT zone we were in. It was an absolute game changer for us. Just the communication piece alone of not having to educate each coach every single day made it 10 times easier and more efficient.”

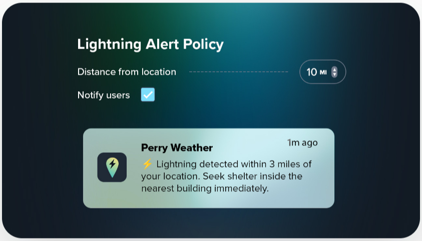
Segment app users to avoid notification overload

LISD spans across such a large geographical area, meaning weather like thunderstorms and lightning can impact one area of the district while others aren’t impacted at all.

The Perry Weather software allows you to segment users so they only receive notifications relevant to their school, or their sport.

They can also enable “Quiet Mode” in the app, so they don’t receive notifications when there aren’t any outdoor activities happening – precise time spent with family.

“We have tons of users, including football coaches, baseball and soccer coaches, tennis coaches, elementary P.E. teachers and administrators. We can all actively monitor weather so we are making good decisions for our kids.”



Lightning Alert Policy

Distance from location 10 MI

Notify users ☑

Perry Weather 1m ago

⚡ Lightning detected within 3 miles of your location. Seek shelter inside the nearest building immediately.

Lightning alerts better than Thor Guard

The Perry Weather platform doesn’t just measure heat stress, it also detects lightning strikes in the area and notifies users when lightning reaches a certain number of miles away, so you can track how close the strikes are, and whether or not they’re in a danger zone.

This is important in the DFW area, where thunderstorms and lightning can come out of nowhere.

(If you don’t have a lightning policy, we can help you set one up! Most customers will set their lightning policies to let them know when lightning strikes are within a radius of 30, 20, and 10 miles away. The first two are warnings, but if lightning strikes within 10 miles away, it’s time to get inside.)

“If lightning is popping up, it may be out to the west of us in Fort Worth but moving east, but it’s letting me know quickly that we’re probably going to need to make a change for practice or games. So it helps us keep those kids safe in that aspect.”

Before switching to Perry Weather, Jenschke and his team were using Thor Guard for lightning safety.

“Thor Guard served a purpose for a while, but Perry Weather is a newer technology and allows for communication with the app. It’s up to date. I can actually pull up a radar and see where the lightning is at and where it’s coming from. With what you get from Perry Weather, it’s just 10 times better. It was the right decision to move.”

Know when to resume activity with lightning countdown timers

Each time lightning strikes within a specified radius, a 30-minute countdown timer will begin in the app. Once the countdown timer is done, it’s safe to resume outdoor activity.

If another lightning strike is detected within your specified radius, the countdown timer will reset.

This allows you to not only know when it’s safe to resume activity, but it will give a better idea on when you’ll be able to make that decision.

“One of our favorite things about Perry Weather is the lightning countdown in the app. It’s nice to have something that everybody can look at and understand – here’s where we’re at, here’s how long we’ve been counting down, and whether or not we can get back on the field. So maybe we need to wait it out a little longer, but at least we can and make good decisions.”

The lightning detection feature even works during away games! Just set a new location in the app.

Pro tip: Let your away game coaches, athletic trainers and officials know that you're using the Perry Weather app. That way, if lightning strikes, you can work together to make a weather safety plan.

Better decisionmaking with meteorologist support

With everything falling on Jenschke's shoulders, he doesn't have time to play meteorologist.

"I'm not Pete Delkus, and it's tough. But the beautiful thing about Perry Weather is that it takes that piece completely off my plate."

It can get tricky when you're down to the wire and trying to make a gameday decision, especially when you're on a tight deadline to get your games in.

"When you're playing UIL sports, you have a timeline that you have to get certain games in. If you don't meet those timelines, your playoff game can come down to a coin flip. It's not fun to have to tell your football, baseball and soccer coaches, *'Hey guys, we're not gonna be able to get this game in. We waited too long. We weren't very proactive on what we wanted to do for our weather.'"*

No one wants a playoff game to come down to a coin flip.

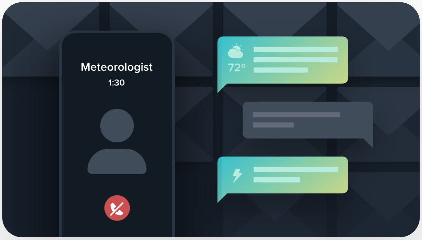
But we've got our customers' backs – if you're planning ahead for a major event, you can call our professional meteorology team for proactive weather forecast updates. They can look up the weather in your area and walk you through the likelihood of a weather event impacting your game, and what a better schedule would look like.

"This past year alone, during our playoff runs, we modified multiple games with just the information that we got from the meteorologists. We were able to get all of our games in without lightning delays, without a heat stress problem, because we were able to talk to meteorologists to find out when our window of opportunity was to be able to play safely for the kids and get it in, because it's a very important thing. All with just a call or email. We made really, really good decisions for our kids."

And the best part: our support and met teams respond in less than 15 minutes!

"The customer service is top notch. Whenever I make a phone call or send an email, I'm going to get our account representative every single time, and quickly."

Jenschke continues, "They know their clientele. They know how vast our district is and how different it is from the east side to the west side. It's all very different. They know what we look like, how big our school district is, and they understand all the different parts and nuances that we have to have."



Conclusion: Perry Weather enables better weather decisionmaking

At the end of the day, it's Jenschke's job to make sure his student athletes are safe, and that includes weather safety.

But the weather is unpredictable, and he needs to have access to the best weather technologies and tools available to do his job well. Between heat stress and lightning, Jenschke was using two different tools – Thor Guard and Kestrel – and needed to get all weather information from one single source of truth. That's where Perry Weather fits in.

Perry Weather enables Jenschke and his team of athletic trainers to monitor heat stress risk in real-time, automate heat stress compliance, and focus on the most important thing: their student athletes.

Final thoughts from Jenschke: "With Perry Weather, I don't even have to think. It makes it 10 times easier for everything that we do when it comes to heat stress issues, lightning, severe weather, and even cold weather. It helps us communicate. It helps us be proactive."

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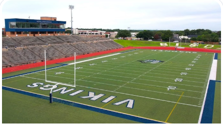

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