

CONWAY PARKS, RECREATION & TOURISM LIGHTNING POLICY



“Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect interscholastic athletics. Within the United States, the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) estimates that 100 fatalities and 400-500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes each year. While the probability of being struck by lightning is extremely low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and the proper safety precautions are not followed.” (*Excerpt from NCAA Guide Line 1d Lightning Safety.*)

I. Chain of Command

- The responsibility for removing athletes from a practice/game area due to the threat of lightning lies with the recreation staff.
- In the event recreation staff is not present, Game officials will assume responsibility.
- In the event the recreation staff nor officials are present, the coaches will assume responsibility

II. Means of Monitoring Weather

- The recreation staff will have access to the “Strike Alert” monitor. If this monitor is unavailable, the flash/bang method will be used.
- Flash/Bang Method: Count the number of seconds which past between a lightning strike (flash) and the following sound of thunder (bang). Take the number of seconds between flash and bang then divide by five, the resulting number is the approximate distance, in miles, from the practice/game area to the lightning flash.
- Local news and internet will also be monitored before practice/games and during postponement of practice or game.

III. Suspension and Resumption of Athletic Activity

- Suspension of athletic activity should occur when lightning is within six miles or the Flash/Bang ratio reaches thirty (30) seconds.
- Flash/Bang can be used in conjunction with local weather reports to make a sound decision.
- Resumption of athletic activity should not occur until thirty (30) minutes after the last flash to bang is seen/heard which is less than six miles or 30 seconds.

IV. Safe Locations from a Lightning Hazard

- Any fully enclosed, substantial building; ideally with plumbing, electrical wiring and telephone service which aid in grounding the building.
- If a substantial building is not available, a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and the windows completely enclosed is a reasonable alternative.
- Cellular or cordless telephones should be used for summoning help during a thunderstorm. They are a reasonably safer alternative to land-line telephones.

V. Unsafe Locations from a Lightning Hazard

- Small structures such as rain or picnic shelters, dug outs, under the stands or athletic storage sheds should be avoided during thunderstorms.
- Convertible vehicles and golf carts do not provide a high level of protection and cannot be considered safe from lightning.

- Locker-room shower areas, swimming pools (indoor and outdoor), land-line telephones and electrical appliances are also unsafe due to the possible contact with current carrying conduction.

VI. If No Safe Location is Available

- Find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch.
- Stay away from the tallest trees or objects (i.e. light poles or flag poles), metal objects (i.e. fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields.
- Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of your feet touching the ground, head lowered and cover your ears. **DO NOT LIE FLAT!**
- A person who feels his/her hair stand on end or skin tingle should immediately assume the position described above.

VII. Obligation to Warn

- According to a basic principle of tort law, an individual has a duty to warn others of dangers that may not be obvious to a guest of that person.
- A warning will be given to spectators of athletic events if lightning activity becomes an imminent danger in the immediate area.

VIII. Pre-hospital Care of Lightning Strike Victims

- Activate the local emergency management system.
- Lightning strike victims do not carry a charge and are safe to assess.
- The first rule of CPR, make sure the scene is safe, applies as well. If need be move the victim to a safe location.
- It has been demonstrated that there is a high success rate of resuscitating lightning strike victims using CPR. Thus, it is imperative to treat the ““apparently dead”” first by promptly initiating CPR.
- Secondary survey should include evaluating and treating these common injuries from lightning strikes: hypothermia, shock, fractures and burns.

IX. Sport: All Outdoor Practices/Games

Chain of Command for determination of suspension and resumption of outdoor sport practice areas due to the threat of lightning is as follows:

- Recreation Staff
- Game Officials/Referees
- Head Coach of that particular sport
- Assistant Coach of that particular sport