

## LIGHTNING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### DEFINITION

#### LIGHTNING

In the United States, an average of 300 people are struck by lightning each year. Of those struck, there are approximately 40 fatalities from lightning each year. Approximately 50-60% of lightning casualties occur during organized sports or recreational activities according to the National Weather Service. Most of these fatalities can be prevented.

#### Weather Apps

- It is strongly recommended that an independent and objectively verified weather app (such as the Perry Weather App, the National Weather Service app, etc.) be available at all outdoor activities, including practices and contests. This should be part of your venue-specific emergency action plan.
- Acceptable alternatives to the verified weather apps include but are not limited to: immediate contact with the local weather services, local television or radio. Access to these sources can be through the Internet, cellular telephone and/or any other means that provides the information needed for real time decisions to be made.

### GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES

In your venue-specific emergency action plan, you must:

1. Assign a staff member to monitor local weather conditions before and during practices and contests. This staff member is designated to make the final call on suspending and resuming the game.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safer areas and determine the amount of time needed to get everyone to a designated safer area:
  - a. Utilize announcements/public address announcer to help guide teams and fans to the appropriate shelter and identifying safe places as noted below.
  - b. Safe locations need to be identified and shared with teams, spectators and workers prior to the start of the activity or athletic event.
  - c. A designated safer place is a substantial building with plumbing and wiring where people live or work, such as a school, gymnasium, locker rooms or buses/cars. An alternate safer place from the threat of lightning is a fully enclosed (not convertible or soft top) metal car or school bus.
  - d. **Unsafe locations include but are not limited to: Picnic areas, parks, open sided shelters (dugouts), storage sheds, open garages, tents, press boxes, areas close to open water, tall objects such as trees, poles, towers, and elevated areas.**

***\* Weather contingency plans should be reviewed prior to each game at a pre-game huddles and should include but not limited to the site director, an official, and athletic trainer (when applicable)***

## **LIGHTNING POLICY AND PROCEDURES (Cont.)**

3. When a thunderstorm seems imminent, lightning is seen or heard, or the weather app indicates that lightning is within 10 miles, the outdoor venue (small or large) needs to be evacuated. Proceed to a lightning safe area.
  4. Activities shall be suspended, and all personnel are directed to move to safe locations. The call to suspend activity due to close lightning should be based on how fast the storm is approaching and the amount of time it will take for event participants to take appropriate safe shelter. At a minimum, by the time the lightning storm has reached 10 miles away from the location of the outdoor activity, all individuals should have left the outdoor athletic site and reached a safe location. Weather monitoring subscriptions should be set at a 10 mile radius from the center of the sporting event (venue specific).
  5. Criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
    - a. When thunder is heard or lightning is seen\*, the leading edge of the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for at least 30 minutes and vacate the outdoor activity to the previously designated safer location immediately.
    - b. 30-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning is witnessed\* prior to resuming play.
    - c. Any subsequent thunder or lightning\* after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
    - d. When lightning-detection devices or mobile phone apps are available, this technology could be used to assist in making a decision to suspend play if a lightning strike is noted to be within 10 miles of the event location. However, you should never depend on the reliability of these devices and, thus, hearing thunder or seeing lightning\* should always take precedence over information from a mobile app or lightning- detection device.
- \* – **PER NFHS** At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty.
6. Review the lightning safety policy annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel and train all personnel.
  7. Inform student-athletes and their parents of the lightning policy at start of the season in your pre-season meeting.

### **No App or Technology Available**

When a weather app is not available, the default NFHS policy that appears in the Rules Book of each sport shall be followed. In brief, that policy requires suspension of all activity when cloud-to-ground lightning is observed, or thunder is heard. If thunder is heard, lightning is assumed to be striking within 10 miles.

Implement the Thirty Minute Rule as noted in the NFHS Policy

## **LIGHTNING POLICY AND PROCEDURES (Cont.)**

When activities are suspended, the following individuals shall be responsible for the safety of personnel:

- The head coach for players and other team personnel.
- Game management guiding spectators and personnel to safe areas
- The senior official for the officiating crew.
- All game management personnel, administrators, coaches and officials must be thoroughly familiar with the NFHS default policy as well as this policy.

### **MANAGEMENT**

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to be touched by others.

- Call 911
- If possible, an injured person should be moved to a safer location before starting CPR.
- Start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Lightning-strike victims with signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need immediate emergency help.
- Activate the local emergency management system and utilize an AED if available. Prompt, effective CPR has been highly successful for the survival of lightning strike victims.