



Lightning Safety





Lightning Facts

- Lightning is dangerous—(obvious)
 - often overlooked as sports risk
- Second leading cause of weather-related deaths in U.S.
- Kills over 100 people each year
- Severely injures hundreds more
- Sports associations & officials need to have a plan in place



Why Overlooked in Planning for Risks?

- **Unpredictable**—don't know when / where will strike
- **Uncontrollable**—can't stop lightning, so feel powerless to avoid danger
- **Uninformed**—ignorance is bliss
- **Unnecessary pressure**—participants “little rain won't hurt” (uninformed)
 - important game
 - close score
 - fear of being second guessed



Contest Officials Must Make the Hard Calls

- Participants are responsible for their own safety
- But, officials play an important role in minimizing risks



Keys to Making Safe Calls

1. Get **EDUCATED**—learn about the risks and inform other participants
3. Make a **PLAN**—know what to do **BEFORE** risk presents
5. Keep it in **PERSPECTIVE**—put safety above all else—**IT'S JUST A GAME**



Action Plan

- Develop a plan ahead of time and stick to it
- The plan should apply to all activities—warm up, practice, game

Include details about:

- Who is in charge
- When to stop play
- Where to go
- When to resume play



WHO IS IN CHARGE?

- Establish chain of command with one person designated to watch weather (may be contest official or game manager, but decide in advance)

Person in charge:

- Observe / be aware of conditions at all times
- Monitor the forecast / Nat'l Weather Service warnings, watches
- Stop play if dangerous conditions exist
- Remove participants from field
- Warn spectators to seek shelter
- Provide information on shelter
- Keep participants informed so they can make responsible decisions



When to Stop Play?

- Use common sense / good judgment
- Put SAFETY FIRST
- Postpone / suspend if thunderstorm appears imminent
 - Darkening clouds
 - High winds
 - Sudden increase in humidity
- Lightning can strike miles from storm and first strike can be deadly
- May need to suspend even BEFORE first sight of lightning / sound of thunder
- Listen to participants—are they concerned?
- Individuals should not face repercussions or penalty if they leave to seek shelter



Where to Go?

- No place is absolutely safe
- Some places are better than others
 - Large, enclosed structures (plumbing, electrical wiring, phone lines)
 - Vehicle—not first choice, but can be reasonable alternative IF
 - Metal roof
 - Fully enclosed
 - Avoid metal surfaces within car
 - Not golf cart or convertible



AVOID

- Areas of high elevation
- Wide open areas (contest fields)
- Tall, isolated objects (trees, poles)
- Metal fences / bleachers
- Unprotected buildings—dugouts, picnic pavilions, rain shelters, bus stops



When to Resume Play?

- Wait AT LEAST 30 minutes after last lightning seen or thunder heard
- If at minute 25, see / hear more activity, start the count over
- Do NOT rely on clear sky, lack of rainfall



When to Resume Play?

- Even if storm moved on, lightning risk may remain because storm can be miles from lightning
- Do not shorten the 30 minute rule
- Do not resume play if any threat remains

Remember

- Use common sense / good judgment / make the hard (safe) call
- ALL TIMES GO TO SAFETY—when in doubt, suspend play
- A game can ALWAYS be made up