

Thunderstorm/Lightning Recommendations

1. All responsible parties (athletic directors, game officials, athletic trainers, first responders, sports safety technicians, coaches, principals and team physicians) should know that evening's forecast for possible thunderstorms. **Establish a chain of command for practices and games.**
2. If conditions appear right, or the day's forecast suggests possibility of thunderstorms, someone from the home team should be appointed to monitor conditions. This may include the use of a NOAA weather radio or local TV stations for thunderstorm warnings (severe thunderstorms have been sighted or indicated by radar) or the use of personal lightning storm detectors. It is recommended that this person be someone other than a coach or official since their attention is usually confined to the playing field. All responsible parties should be responsive to this individual's findings. This will require discussion prior to the starting of the event between those monitoring conditions and the game officials so an agreement on a plan of action can be reached.
3. All play on the field should be stopped and the field and stands immediately evacuated if any of the following occur:
 - a. Thunderstorm warning for the area has been announced by NOAA weather radio or local TV report
 - b. Lightning storm detectors signal thunderstorm warning
 - c. Conditions are right for the development of an impending lightning strike
 - d. Lightning is within six miles of the playing field (using flash to bang)
4. Upon stoppage of the game, all players and staff should immediately evacuate the field to indoor confines.
5. A PA announcement should be made that all spectators should immediately evacuate the stands and find shelter within the confines of a building or car until further announcements are made. Standing under bleachers, press boxers, tall trees or light posts is not safe. If a cafeteria or gymnasium (without an indoor pool) is readily available, they may be helpful for evacuation.
6. Once it has been determined that lightning strike is impending, play should not resume for a minimum of 30 minutes. At 15-minute intervals, assessment of the proximity of the storm can be made following the above recommendations (radio/TV monitoring, assessing the sound of thunder to assure no storm is within six miles, assessing for potential conditions for the development of thunderstorms). The direction the storm is traveling (away from, toward, or parallel to you) should also be assessed. If after 30 minutes conditions are not felt to be safe, the responsible party should wait an additional 15 minutes to reassess conditions. This may need to be longer; if it is felt new storms are approaching or have developed. This process should be continued until conditions are felt to be safe. If conditions are not felt to be approaching a safe situation, cancellation of the game should be entertained.
7. The best approach to assessment is by a committee of all of those individuals responsible (see above). Because time is of the essence, appropriate strategy should be formulated prior to the start of the game to prevent any hesitation or delay in stoppage of the game. Once the game is stopped, discussion by all responsible parties, using above recommendations, can take place in order to determine safe conditions for starting the game.