

Parks at Texas Star

LIGHTNING SAFETY POLICY

Background:

Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect an athlete. Within the United States, the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) estimates more than 100 fatalities and 400-500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes every 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.

Prevention and education of our staff are the keys to lightning safety. Education begins with information on lightning. Prevention should begin long before any game or athletic event is held.

Section I: Responsibility of Facility Administrator

The **Facility Administrator** (Athletics Supervisor, Athletics Coordinator, PATS MOD or PATS Lead) will institute the implementation of the lightning policy. The **Facility Administrator** can activate the safety plan by suspending an event.

The **Facility Administrator** assumes the responsibility of informing all participants/teams, game officials and the general public of any threat of lightning.

Section II: Designate A Weather Watcher

In the event that severe weather is approaching the area, designate a staff member to monitor the weather. When monitoring the weather look specifically for lightning and listen for thunder. Do not hesitate to suspend games if you feel that severe weather (LIGHTNING) is an emanate threat. If games are suspended due to severe weather, it is the responsibility of the PATS staff to contact either the Athletics Supervisor or the Athletics Coordinator.

Section III: Monitor Local Weather Forecasts

Be aware of the National Weather Service-issued (NWS) thunderstorm “watch” and “warning” as well as the signs of thunderstorms developing nearby. Radio stations will interrupt regular broadcasting to give severe weather updates. Monitor these updates!

- ▶ A “watch” means conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in an area.
- ▶ A “warning” means that severe weather has been reported in an area and for everyone to take precautions.

Section IV: Define Safe Locations

Define safe locations for participants, game officials and the general public.

Primary Locations:

1. Any building normally occupied or frequently used by people.

Example: Building with plumbing and/or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure.

Secondary Location:

1. In the absence of a sturdy, frequently inhabited building, any vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled-up windows can provide a measure of safety.

A vehicle is certainly better than remaining outdoors. It is not the rubber tires that make a vehicle a safe shelter, but the hard metal roof, which dissipates the lightning strike around the vehicle.

DO NOT TOUCH THE SIDES OF THE VEHICLE

Avoid being in or near:

High places and open fields, isolated trees, unprotected gazebos, rain or picnic shelters, *baseball dugouts*, communication towers, flagpoles, light poles, bleachers(metal or wood), metal fences, convertibles, golf carts or water.

When inside a building, avoid:

The use of a telephone, washing your hands, doing dishes or any contact with conductive surfaces with exposure to the outside such as metal door or window frames, electrical wiring, telephone wiring, cable TV wiring or plumbing.

Section V: Lightning Safety Rules and the “30-30” rule

The “30-30” Rule: Suspension of play

To estimate the distance between you and a lightning flash, use the **Flash to Bang** method. The Flash to Bang method is the most reliable, easiest and most convenient way to estimate how far away lightning is occurring.

Thunder always accompanies lightning, even though its audible range can be diminished due to background noise in the immediate environment, and its distance from the observer. Audible range of thunder is about 8-10 miles

How to use Flash to Bang:

Count the number of **seconds**, once **lightning** is sighted, until the **thunder** (bang) is heard. Divide by 5 to obtain how far away (in miles) the lightning is occurring.

Example:

If an individual counts 15 seconds between seeing the flash and hearing the bang, 15 divided by five (5) equals three (3); therefore, the lightning flash is approximately three (3) miles away.

Play is suspended as Flash to Bang method reaches 30 seconds. This indicates the lightning is at the 6-mile range.

Lightning awareness should be increased with the first flash of lightning or the first clap of thunder, **no matter how far away.** This activity must be treated as a wake-up call to those monitoring inclement weather. The important aspect to monitor is how far away the lightning is occurring, and how fast the storm is approaching, relative to the distance of safe shelter.

As a minimum, the National Severe Storm Laboratory (NSSL) and NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports strongly recommend that by the time the observer obtains a FLASH TO BANG count of 30 seconds, all individuals should have left the athletics site and reached a safe structure or location.

The existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can and does, strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain shaft. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike.

“30-30” Safety Rule: Resumption of Play

Resumption of play can continue only when lightning or thunder **has not** been detected for 30 minutes (this means that a delay due to thunder or lightning will last a **minimum** of 30 minutes). Every time lightning or thunder is detected within the 30 minutes, **THE CLOCK RESTARTS.**

Evidence of blue sky in the local area, or lack of rainfall are not adequate reasons to breach the thirty minute return to play rule. Lightning can strike far from where it is raining, even when the clouds begin to clear and show evidence of blue sky.

Criteria for suspension of activities-- By the time Flash to Bang count approaches 30 seconds, all individuals should already be moving towards a safe shelter.

Criteria for resumption of activities-- Wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound (thunder) or observation of lightning before resuming the activity.

- **If you hear it (thunder), clear it!!!!**
- **If you see it (lightning), flee it!!!!**