

# GUIDELINES ON LIGHTNING SAFETY

A Position Statement from the National Athletic Trainers Association  
adapted and reprinted by The National Association  
for Sport and Physical Education

1. Establish a chain of command that identifies who is to make the call to remove individuals from the field.
2. Name a designated weather watcher (a person who actively looks for the signs threatening weather and notifies the chain of command if severe weather becomes dangerous).
3. Have a means of monitoring local weather forecasts and warnings.
4. Designate a safe shelter for each venue.
5. Use the Flash-to-Bang count to determine when to go to safety. By the time flash-to-bang count approaches thirty seconds, all individuals should be already inside a safe structure.
6. Once activities have been suspended, wait at least thirty minutes following the last sound of thunder or lightning flash prior to resuming an activity or returning outdoors.
7. Avoid being the highest point in an open field, in contact with, or proximity to the highest point, as well as being on the open water. Do not take shelter under or near trees, flagpoles, or light poles.
8. Assume the lightning safety position (crouched on the ground, weight on the balls of the feet, feet together, head lowered, and ears covered) for individuals who feel their hair stand on end, skin tingle, or hear "crackling" noises. Do not lie flat on the ground.
9. Observe the following basic first aid procedures in managing victims of a lightning strike:
  - a. Survey the scene for safety
  - b. Activate local EMS
  - c. Lightning victims do not "carry a charge" and are safe to touch
  - d. If necessary, move the victim with care to a safer location
  - e. Evaluate airway, breathing, and circulation, and begin CPR if necessary
  - f. Evaluate and treat for hypothermia, shock, fractures and/or burns
10. All individuals have the right to leave an athletic site in order to seek safe structure if the person feels in danger of impending lightning activity, without fear of repercussions or penalty from anyone.

## Safe Shelter:

1. A safe location is any substantial, frequently inhabited building. The building should have four solid walls (not a dug out), electrical and telephone wiring, as well as plumbing, all of which aid in grounding a structure.
2. The secondary choice for a safer location from the lightning hazard is a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and the windows completely closed. It is important to not touch any part of the metal framework of the vehicle while inside it during ongoing thunderstorms.

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3. It is not safe to shower, bathe or talk on landline phones while inside of a safe shelter during thunderstorms (cell phones are okay).

## **Flash-to-Bang:**

To use the flash-to-bang method, begin counting when sighting a lightning flash. Counting is stopped when the associated bang (thunder) is heard. Divide this count by five to determine the distance to the lightning flash (in miles). For example, a flash-to-bang count of thirty seconds equates to a distance of six miles. Lightning has struck from as far away as ten miles from the storm center. *"If you hear it, clear it; if you see it, flee it."*

Postpone or suspend activity if a thunderstorm appears imminent before or during an activity or contest, (irrespective of whether lightning is seen or thunder heard) until the hazard has passed. Signs of imminent thunderstorm activity are darkening clouds, high winds, and thunder or lightning activity.