



Jacksonville Sports Medicine Program Promotes Lightning Safety Guidelines

- I. **Purpose:** To ensure the safety of student-athletes, guests and staff during outdoor activities and to provide the criteria for suspension and sheltering when lightning is detected approaching or threatening outdoor activities.
- II. **Background:** Lightning strikes approximately 100,000 people annually in the United States killing approximately 1/3 of the victims. The state of Florida has the highest incidence of fatality from lightning strikes than the rest of the United States. Although lightning can sometimes strike totally unsuspecting; more than likely we are aware of impending storms making this type of injury **PREVENTABLE**. Use this policy as your procedural resource when you are concerned with the weather forecast prior to your sporting event within the Duval County Public Schools.
- III. Use this plan as a procedural resource when you encounter an emergency athletic injury situation within the School System.

IV. **Procedure :**

General

- A. All Athletic Directors, Administrators, Athletic Trainers, and Coaches should review this procedure prior to the beginning of each sporting season.
- B. It is understood that various levels of medical supervision exist within our school system and the coach should at all times be prepared to be the primary care giver to an athlete who has sustained an injury. The coach should be familiar with the level of medical supervision that is readily available within their particular school and should obtain and keep current all contact information associated with the medical staff.
- C. Coaches should have completed an emergency action plan prior to their specific sport season consistent with the venue in which their team will participate and completely rehearse this plan prior to hosting an event.

Specific

D. The Licensed Athletic Trainer will monitor the weather and make the decision to notify the head coach or officials of dangerous situations and recommend the suspension of activity in the event of lightning. Exceptions will be made for any activity for which the Licensed Athletic Training staff member is not in attendance, whereby the supervising coach will have the responsibility to suspend activity.

E. The decision to suspend activity will be based on:

- **First**, a portable Lightning Detector. The detector will be set to activate when lightning is within **8 miles**. If this occurs all outside activities will cease and must not continue until 30 minutes have passed with no more alarms. This means that everyone participating outdoors will need to leave the field and seek shelter indoors. Efforts will be made to ensure that all teams are aware that the portable detector has detected lightning.

If inclement weather is in the area and the lightning detector is not available for your event or you have not received word from a member of the athletic training staff, then the athletic trainer covering or **coach** will utilize:

- The **Flash-to-Bang Method** (Count the seconds from the time the lightning is sighted to when the clap of thunder is heard. Divide this number by five to obtain how far away, in miles, the lightning is occurring.) If it reveals lightning to be within 8 miles (a 40 second count between the flash of lightning and the bang of thunder) ***activity is to be suspended and everyone should seek shelter immediately.***

E. **PRIOR TO COMPETITION:** The Licensed Athletic Trainer and/or Head Coach, Athletic Director will greet the officials; explain that we have a means to monitor lightning, and offer to notify the officials during the game if there is imminent danger from the lightning. The Athletic Director, Coach or administrator and game officials will then decide whether to discontinue play.

F. **ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUSPENSION OF ACTIVITY:** Once it is determined that there is danger of a lightning strike, the licensed athletic trainer will notify the head coach and/or official and immediately remove all athletes, coaches, and support staff from the playing field or practice area/facility.

G. **EVACUATION OF THE PLAYING FIELD:** Immediately following the announcement of suspension of activity all athletes, coaches, officials and support personnel are to evacuate to the nearest enclosed grounded structure.

H. **RESUMPTION OF ACTIVITY:** During practice, activity may resume under the following conditions.. This decision will be based on:

Thirty minutes AFTER the last alarm from the lightning detector **OR** thirty minutes after a lightning strike within an 8-mile range using the Flash-Bang method.

During a game situation the activity will resume once the Athletic Director, Licensed Athletic Trainer and officials have conferred and the above criteria have been met.

Additional guidelines:

Safe Buildings

A safe building is one that is fully enclosed with a roof, walls and floor, such as a home, school, office building or a shopping center. Even inside, you should take precautions. Picnic shelters, dugouts, sheds and other partially open or small structures are **NOT** safe.

Enclosed buildings are safe because of wiring and plumbing. If lightning strikes these types of buildings, or an outside telephone pole, the electrical current from the flash will typically travel through the wiring or the plumbing into the ground. This is why you should stay away from showers, sinks, hot tubs, etc., and electronic equipment such as TVs, radios, and computers.

Unsafe Buildings

Examples of buildings which are **unsafe** include car ports, covered but open garages, covered patio, picnic shelters, beach shacks/pavilions, golf shelters, camping tents, large outdoor tents, **baseball dugouts** and other small buildings such as sheds and greenhouses that do not have electricity or plumbing.

Safe Vehicle

A safe vehicle is a hard-topped car, SUV, minivan, bus, tractor, etc. (soft-topped convertibles are not safe). If you seek shelter in your vehicle, make sure all doors are closed and windows rolled up. Do not touch any metal surfaces.

Sample PA announcement:

EVACUATION OF THE STANDS: During a competition, once the decision to suspend activity has been made, a representative of the athletic department will announce via the PA system:

May I have your attention? We have been notified of approaching inclement weather.

Activity will cease until we have determined it is safe and the risk of lightning has

diminished. We advise you to seek shelter in the following areas:

- 1. Fans are advised to immediately seek shelter in the nearest enclosed, grounded shelter.*

This may include: (different for each school)