

# Florida Travel Lacrosse League Events Lightning Policy

## Lightning Policy/Procedure

Lightning is a dangerous phenomenon. Athletic teams that practice and compete outdoors are at risk when the weather is inclement. The safest measure to take is to proceed indoors whenever you see thunderclouds forming and remain until the storm passes. Visible lightning is not the only indicator of an impending electrical storm. Other warning signs include: sudden decrease in temperature, sudden change in humidity, increase in air movement, and visible dark storm clouds (though not always present during lightning strikes). The athletic training staff has a lightning detection policy in place for practices and games; however we are aware that athletic facilities are often used without supervision. We would like to educate you on the use of the Flash-to-Bang Method and encourage you to use caution when inclement weather approaches.

## The Flash-to-Bang Method

- Watch the sky for lightning.
- Once the flash of lightning is detected begin to count until you hear thunder. Use either a stopwatch or count like so; one, one thousand, two one thousand, and so on.
- Divide that count by 5 (5 seconds = 1 mile). This value represents your distance from that lightning strike in miles. EXAMPLE: You see a flash of lightning and you begin to count. You reach 45 before you hear the thunder.  $45/5 = 9$ . The lightning would be approximately 9 miles away.
- You should seek shelter when lightning approaches a ten-mile radius of your location. Hence, if you hear thunder before you reach a count of 50 seconds, you should seek shelter.
- It will be safe to return to your activities after 30 minutes have passed from the last lightning strike within an eight-mile radius of your location. Use the flash-to-bang method to determine the last strike in your area.

## Safety Tips:

- Avoid contact with metal objects (bleachers, lacrosse sticks).
- A tree or grouping of trees should be avoided.
- If there is no other shelter you may seek refuge in a hard top vehicle. It is not the rubber tires that protect from lightning; it is the hard top metal roof that dissipates the lightning around the vehicle.
- The existence of blue skies and/or absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can strike 10 miles from the rain.
- DO NOT LIE FLAT ON THE GROUND.
- Avoid using a landline telephone.
- Avoid standing water and open field.
- If you are in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick grove of small trees.
- If you feel your skin tingling immediately crouch and grab your legs and tuck your head to minimize your body's surface area.
- For additional information refer to the National Lightning Safety Institute at [www.lightningsafety.com](http://www.lightningsafety.com)
- The National Severe Storms Laboratory recommends that by the time the spotter obtains a flash-to-bang count of fifteen seconds, all individuals should have left the athletic site and reached "safe shelter".
- NO METHOD OF LIGHTNING DETECTION CAN DETECT EVERY STRIKE.

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## Lightning Detection Procedure During an Athletic Event

Prior to competition /practice, the athletic trainer/site supervisor will monitor the weather forecast utilizing local radio/ internet stations, and cell phone App. Officials and coaches will be notified in advance of the potential for inclement weather. At this time, the policy regarding stoppage of play and return to activity will be reviewed. In addition, access will be obtained to the primary shelter pending evacuation.

### Detection of Lightning

- The athletic trainer/site supervisor will monitor the sky for lightning flashes from cloud to cloud and/or cloud to ground.
- If using a cell phone app, such as Weather Bug, a valid lightning strike within the 3-10 mile range will require evacuation from the venue. A strike within the 10-20 mile range will prompt a heightened state of alert with readiness to evacuate.
- If the flash-to-bang method is used the athletic trainer/site supervisor will begin to count once a flash is seen until the thunder is heard. The count will be taken using either a stopwatch or by counting one, one thousand, two one thousand, and so on. Divide the count by 5 (5 seconds= 1 mile). This value represents your distance from that lightning strike in miles. EXAMPLE: You see a flash of lightning and you begin to count. You reach 45 before you hear the thunder.  $45/5=9$ . The lightning would be approximately 9 miles away.
- Many local parks/ fields have a lightning detector. If it sounds everyone needs to clear the area. The detector will also give the all clear when it is safe to return.
- All activity will be suspended when lightning approaches an 8 mile radius of the site.

### Announcement to coaches and officials:

The athletic trainer/site supervisor will notify the head coach and/or officials that there is an imminent danger from approaching lightning. At this time, evacuation will begin as promptly as possible.

### Evacuation of the playing field/facility:

Spectators, coaches, and athletes are to evacuate to an appropriate shelter as directed by site supervisors and personnel. A safe shelter may consist of a hardtop vehicle, or any fully enclosed buildings. Inappropriate shelters include open-ended structures such as dugouts, concession stands, field bathrooms, garden sheds, golf carts, and trees. If you are not able to reach an appropriate shelter, seek a flat area where you are not the highest object. Crouch down wrapping your arms around your knees, lower your head and wait for the storm to pass.

### Resumption of Activity:

Activity may resume once the athletic trainer/site supervisor determines that the site is safe for activity. The all clear will be given when 30 minutes has passed from the last lightning strike within an 8 mile radius of the venue, if the local lightening detector gives the all clear, and/ or the App gives a safe distance.