

IGHSAU GUIDELINES FOR LIGHTNING SAFETY

WHEN THUNDER IS HEARD OR CLOUD-TO-GROUND LIGHTNING IS SEEN, SUSPEND PLAY AND TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY.

ONCE PLAY HAS BEEN SUSPENDED, WAIT AT LEAST 30 MINUTES FROM THE LAST SOUND OF THUNDER OR LIGHTNING STRIKE WITNESSED BEFORE RESUMING THE ACTIVITY.

ANY SUBSEQUENT THUNDER OR LIGHTNING STRIKE DURING THE 30 MINUTE WAITING PERIOD RESETS THE CLOCK, AND A NEW 30 MINUTE WAITING PERIOD BEGINS.

ANYTIME LIGHTNING CAN BE SEEN OR THUNDER HEARD, THE LEADING EDGE OF THE THUNDERSTORM IS CLOSE ENOUGH TO POSE A LIGHTNING RISK

SCHOOL CONSIDERATIONS:

A documented plan for handling severe weather situations such as lightning should be in place. The persons responsible for monitoring weather activity and determining when to suspend practice or competition should be identified. Prior to the start of a contest, home game management officials are responsible for this decision. Once the contest begins, game officials are responsible.

* Ideally this person will NOT be a coach involved in the game or practice, as they may be too involved with their other duties to monitor the weather. In addition, this person should be available to work with game officials to provide accurate and up to date information on the weather.

There are many different methods of monitoring the weather. The internet and mobile device weather applications are one option. Weather radios are available through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service. The Weather Channel can also provide good information on storm movement and strength. Each school will need to determine their most effective means of monitoring the weather.

All personnel, athletes, and spectators should be clearly informed in advance of available safe structures or shelters in the event of severe weather.

- The most ideal safe structure is a fully enclosed building with plumbing, electrical wiring, and telephone service which all aid in grounding the structure.
- Fully enclosed automobiles with metal roofs, including school buses, provide adequate shelter as well.
- Avoid using bathrooms or showers as shelter areas as the plumbing pipelines provide a path for the lightning to enter the structure. Also avoid using corded telephones or headsets during a thunderstorm, and avoid standing near utilities.

If communication is necessary during the storm, cellular and cordless phones are considered reasonably safe.

For further information and lightning safety tips and resources, visit the National Weather's Service website [lightning information](#)

The National Federation of High School's lightning safety information can be found here: [Lightning Guidelines](#)



GUIDELINES ON HANDLING PRACTICES AND CONTESTS DURING LIGHTNING OR THUNDER DISTURBANCES

These guidelines provide a default policy to those responsible or sharing duties for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of practices and contests based on the presence of lightning or thunder. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state high school activities association and the nearest office of the National Weather Service.

PROACTIVE PLANNING

1. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during practices and contests.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safer areas and determine the amount of time needed to get everyone to a designated safer area:
 - a. A designated safer place is a substantial building with plumbing and wiring where people live or work, such as a school, gymnasium or library. An alternate safer place from the threat of lightning is a fully enclosed (not convertible or soft top) metal car or school bus.
3. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
 - a. When thunder is heard or lightning is seen*, the leading edge of the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for at least 30 minutes and vacate the outdoor activity to the previously designated safer location immediately.
 - b. 30-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning is witnessed* prior to resuming play.
 - c. Any subsequent thunder or lightning* after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
 - d. When lightning-detection devices or mobile phone apps are available, this technology could be used to assist in making a decision to suspend play if a lightning strike is noted to be within 10 miles of the event location. However, you should never depend on the reliability of these devices and, thus, hearing thunder or seeing lightning* should always take precedence over information from a mobile app or lightning-detection device.
4. Review the lightning safety policy annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel and train all personnel.
5. Inform student-athletes and their parents of the lightning policy at start of the season.

** – At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty.*