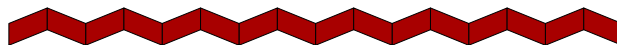




LIGHTNING SAFETY



Safety & Security Fact Sheet

✓ WHAT ARE LIGHTNING AND THUNDER?

Lightning is the buildup and discharge of 125 million volts of electricity. During the lightning strike, measured in microseconds, the heat generated exceeds 50,000°F, many times hotter than the surface of the sun. Rapid heating and cooling of the air near the lightning bolt cause a shock wave that results in thunder.

✓ WHAT IS THE DANGER?

Lightning cannot be stopped or prevented. It is capricious, random, and unpredictable. Each year lightning strikes the ground 15 to 20 million times in the United States, killing almost 100 people and injuring as many as 300 people. Most lightning casualties occur in the summer months and during the afternoon or early evening.

COACHES AND SPORTS OFFICIALS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS, PLAYGROUND MONITORS, AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS MUST RECOGNIZE THE HAZARD POSED BY LIGHTNING AND KNOW WHAT TO DO TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH DURING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES.

✓ WHERE MUST I GO TO ESCAPE THE DANGER?

Safe structures include the nearest school building, a complete enclosure, or a fully enclosed metal vehicle with windows tightly closed. Press boxes, sheds, storage buildings, or dugouts will not provide adequate protection. Once indoors, stay away from open doors and windows, and turn off and stay away from appliances, computers, television sets, etc.

✓ HOW DO I KNOW THAT LIGHTNING IS TOO CLOSE?

When there is thunder, there is lightning. As lightning approaches, the time in seconds from seeing the stroke to hearing the thunder decreases. This is the "flash-to-bang" method for measuring lightning distance. For each 5 second count, lightning is 1 mile away. **At a count of 15 seconds (3 miles) there is imminent danger; seek shelter immediately.** It is strongly recommended that you seek shelter at a count of 30 seconds (6 miles), especially when you are supervising small children or a large number of spectators are at risk.

✓ HOW LONG MUST I REMAIN IN A SHELTER AFTER THE LIGHTNING PASSES?

Wait a minimum of 30 minutes from the last nearby lightning strike (flash-to-bang count no less than 30 seconds) before resuming activities.

✓ WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM UNABLE TO REACH SHELTER?

If caught outdoors in an open field, avoid metallic objects like metal bleachers, fences and gates, flagpoles, light and power poles, trees, and standing water. If you feel your hair standing on end and/or hear crackling noises, you are in the electrical field of lightning that is about to strike. Immediately remove metal objects (buckles, keys, whistles) from contact with your body and minimize contact with the ground; do not lie down. Place your feet together, duck your head, crouch down, and hold your hands over your ears. Avoid contact with other people.

✓ WHAT CAN BE DONE TO TREAT SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING?

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge; it is safe to touch them. Administer CPR immediately if qualified to do so. Get emergency help promptly.

✓ WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The Office of Safty and Security has prepared a detailed set of guidelines for developing an event or site-specific lightning safety program. To obtain a copy of the *Guidelines for Lightning Safety During Athletic Events and on School Playgrounds*, call 571-423-2010.

If you need assistance, call the safety section at 571-423-2010.