

Lightning Safety for Coaches and Officials

Lightning Kills...Play it Safe!

- ⚡ All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. In an average year, lightning kills nearly 50 people in the U.S. Since 2005, lightning has killed five people and injured 28 in Wisconsin.
- ⚡ Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall.
- ⚡ If you hear thunder, you are in danger! Anytime thunder is heard, the thunderstorm is close enough to pose an immediate lightning threat to your location.
- ⚡ Have a lightning safety plan. Designate a safe location before the event starts. Have specific guidelines for suspending the activity so that everyone has time to reach safety.
- ⚡ Prior to a practice or outdoor event, check the latest forecast. If thunderstorms are expected, consider postponing activities early to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.
- ⚡ If you hear thunder, suspend your activity immediately and instruct everyone to get to a safe place. Substantial buildings provide the best protection. Avoid sheds, open shelters, dugouts, bleachers, and grandstands. If a sturdy building is not nearby, a hard-topped metal vehicle with windows closed will offer good protection. Do not crouch or lay down—continue moving to a place of shelter.
- ⚡ If boating or swimming, get to land and find shelter.
- ⚡ Do not resume activities until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder was heard.

Lightning Myths and Truths

MYTH: If it is not raining, there is no danger from lightning.

TRUTH: Lightning can strike outside of rain. If you hear thunder, the storm is close enough to pose a lightning threat.

MYTH: The rubber soles of shoes or rubber tires on a vehicle will protect you from lightning.

TRUTH: Rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection from lightning. The steel frame of a hard-topped vehicle provides increased protection if you are not touching metal. Although you may be injured if lightning strikes your car, you are much safer inside a vehicle than outside.

MYTH: People struck by lightning carry an electric charge and should not be touched.

TRUTH: Lightning-strike victims carry no charge and should be attended to immediately. Contact your local American Red Cross chapter for information on CPR and first aid classes.

MYTH: “Heat lightning” occurs after very hot summer days and poses no threat.

TRUTH: Heat lightning is a term used to describe lightning from a thunderstorm too far away for thunder to be heard.