

Lightning

Board Policy: Lightning/Threatening Weather

1. **Prior to the start of a contest**, the host school is responsible for determining whether or not the conditions present a threat to the safety of participants and spectators, and will determine whether or not the contest will begin.
2. **Once the contest begins** officials will have the lead authority to postpone games. Though once a contest has begun either the officials or school authorities may postpone or suspend a contest, and cannot be over-ruled by the other party. When in doubt, error on the side of safety.
3. **When to postpone:** While lightning on the horizon should warn of potential danger, lightning associated with thunder or thunder alone means that there is immediate danger to athletes, officials, and spectators. The adage — "If you can hear it, clear it." — should be used to make decisions to postpone or cancel the activity. Lightning can strike 10 miles ahead of or behind the storm front and thunderhead clouds.

When considering resumption of an athletic activity, the MSHSL recommends that everyone should wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lighting or sound of thunder before returning to the field or activity.

Additional lightning-safety guidelines have been developed with the assistance of the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL), and are listed below:

1. As a minimum, NSSL staff strongly recommend that by the time the monitor obtains a flash-to-bang count of **30** seconds (equivalent to six miles), all individuals should have left the athletics site and reached a safe structure or location. Athletics events may need to be terminated.
2. The existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can, and does, strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain shaft. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike.
3. If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize contact with the ground, because lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. **MINIMIZE YOUR BODY'S SURFACE AREA, AND MINIMIZE CONTACT WITH THE GROUND! DO NOT LIE FLAT!** If unable to reach safe shelter, stay away from the tallest trees or objects (such as light poles or flag poles), metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the highest object in a field. Do not take shelter under a single, tall tree.
4. A person who feels his or her hair stand on end, or skin tingle should immediately crouch, as described in item 3.
5. Avoid using the telephone, except in emergency situations. People have been struck by lightning while using a land-line telephone. A cellular phone or a portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land-line phones, if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.
6. People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore,

cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is safe for the responder. If possible, an injured person should be moved to a safer location before starting CPR. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help quickly. Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning.