

## Know what to do if someone is struck by lightning.

Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge, are safe to handle, and need immediate medical attention. Cardiac arrest is the immediate cause of death in lightning fatalities. Some deaths can be prevented if the victim immediately receives the proper first aid.

- ▶ **Call for help.** Call 9-1-1 or your local ambulance service.
- ▶ **Give first aid.** Check the victim's pulse and breathing. Begin CPR if necessary. An Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) may also be useful if one is available.
- ▶ **If possible, move the victim to a safer place.** An active thunderstorm is still dangerous. Don't let the rescuers become victims. Lightning CAN strike the same place twice.

## Stay informed, listen to NOAA Weather Radio!

There are an estimated 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes in the United States each year. While the National Weather Service issues severe thunderstorm watches and warnings for storms that produce damaging wind or hail, watches and warnings are NOT issued for lightning. However, **the sound of thunder should serve as an immediate warning of the lightning danger.**

**As a further safety measure, officials at outdoor events may want to have a tone-alert NOAA Weather Radio.** The radio will allow you to monitor any short-term forecasts for changing weather conditions, and the tone-alert feature can automatically alert you in case a severe thunderstorm watch or warning is issued. To find your nearest NOAA weather radio transmitter, go to [www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr) and click on "Station Listing and Coverage."

**A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM** is defined as a storm that produces wind gusts of 58 mph or greater, and/or hail 3/4 of an inch or larger in diameter.

**A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH** is issued when conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop.

**A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING** is issued when severe weather is imminent.



## Lightning Safety Awareness Week

is the last full week of June. For additional information on lightning or lightning safety, visit NOAA's lightning safety web site:

[www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov)

## Lightning Kills ... Play It Safe!

Remember that all thunderstorms produce lightning and all lightning can be deadly to those outside.

U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric Administration  
NOAA's National Weather Service



This safety guide has been prepared to help coaches and sports officials recognize the dangers of lightning and take appropriate safety precautions



**National Lightning Safety Institute**

## Coaches & Sports Officials Guide to

# Lightning Safety



## Lightning... The Underrated Killer!

**A Safety Guide**



# Lightning Kills . . . Play it Safe!

Each year in the United States, more than 400 people are struck by lightning. On average, about 70 people are killed and many others suffer permanent neurological disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be avoided if proper precautions are taken. When thunderstorms threaten, coaches and sports officials must not let the desire to start or complete an athletic activity hinder their judgment when the safety of participants and spectators is in jeopardy.

## Know the basic facts about lightning and its dangers.

- ▶ **All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous.** In an average year, lightning kills more people in the U.S. than either tornadoes or hurricanes.
- ▶ **Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall.** Many deaths from lightning occur ahead of storms because people wait too long before seeking shelter, or after storms because people return outside too soon.
- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **Lightning leaves many victims with permanent disabilities.** While only a small percentage of lightning strike victims die, many survivors must learn to live with very serious, lifelong disabilities.

## Avoid the lightning threat.

- ▶ **Plan ahead.** Have a lightning safety plan. Know where people will go for safety and how much time it will take for them to get there. Have specific guidelines for suspending the event or activity so that everyone has time to reach safety. Follow the plan without exception.

- ▶ **Postpone activities.** Prior to a practice or event, check the latest forecast. If thunderstorms are forecast, consider postponing activities early to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.
- ▶ **Monitor the weather.** Watch and listen for clues of impending danger. Look for darkening skies, flashes of lightning, or increasing wind, which may be signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm. Listen for thunder.
- ▶ **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, suspend your activity immediately and instruct everyone to get to a safe place. Substantial buildings provide the best protection. Once inside, stay off corded phones and away from any wiring or plumbing. Avoid sheds, small or open shelters, dugouts, bleachers, or grandstands. If a sturdy building is not nearby, a hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed will offer good protection.
- ▶ **Stay inside.** Do not resume activities until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder was heard.

## What you should do if you can't get to a safe place.

Being outside during a thunderstorm puts you at risk of being struck by lightning. The measures listed below will reduce that risk somewhat, but are no substitute for getting to a safe place.

- ▶ **Avoid open areas and stay away from isolated tall trees, towers, or utility poles.** Lightning tends to strike the taller objects.

- ▶ **Stay away from metal bleachers, backstops, and fences.** Lightning can travel long distances through metal.
- ▶ **Spread out.** This reduces the risk of multiple lightning casualties.

## If you feel your hair stand on end, lightning is about to strike.

There may be little or nothing you can do to keep from being struck by lightning. As a last desperate resort:

- ▶ **Crouch down on the balls of your feet, put your hands over your ears, and bend your head down.** Make yourself as small a target as possible and minimize your contact with the ground.
- ▶ **Do not lie flat on the ground.**

