

Lightning Safety for Coaches and Officials

Lightning Kills...Play it Safe!

- ⚡ All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. In an average year, lightning kills over 60 people in the U.S.—more than either tornadoes or hurricanes.
- ⚡ Lightning fatalities have been reported in Wisconsin in each of the last two years.
- ⚡ 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 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, small or 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.
- ⚡ 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.