Coastal Carolina University
Athletic Training Department
Policy and Procedure Manual
Lightning Safety
Revised/Reviewed 7/2011

LIGHTNING SAFETY POLICIES

The keys to lightning safety are education and prevention. Prevention should begin long before any athletic event. The first preventative measure to mitigate the lightning hazard is for the coaching/athletic staff to check the weather report each day before a practice or an event. In this way, the staff will be aware of the possibility a storm's forming or moving into the area during the day. The athletic training room is equipped with Thor Guard Lightning Detection System and has access to Doppler radar via the internet, which can assist in monitoring severe weather.

Second, the coaching/ athletic training staff should be aware of the signs of nearby thunderstorm development. Lightning and thunder activity in the local area are the alarms for the coaching/athletic training staff to start monitoring thunderstorm activity, such as direction of movement and distance of lightning flashes. It is imperative to understand that lightning storms can become threatening in as little as half an hour. Furthermore, coaching/athletic training staff should know the location of the safe shelter located closest to the athletic site and how long it takes to reach that shelter. Safe shelter is defined as: 1) a sturdy building that metal plumbing or wiring, or both, to electrically ground the structure, i.e. not a shed and 2) in the absence of a sturdy building as described above, any vehicle with a metal roof. (i.e. not a convertible or golf cart) with the windows rolled up.

Third, the coaching/athletic training staff should be aware of how close lightning is occurring. This will be based on the Thor Guard system. If Thor Guard is unavailable, the "flash-to-bang" method will be utilized to estimate how far away lightning is occurring. Simply stated, count the seconds between seeing the lightning "flash" and hearing the clap of thunder ("bang"). Divide this number by five to determine how far away (in miles) lightning activity is occurring.

The Athletic Training Department of Coastal Carolina University recommends the following policy on lightning safety for intercollegiate outdoor athletic activities, including swimming.

1. The ability to continue outdoor activities will be based on the following Hazard Levels provided by the Thor Guard Lightning Detection System:
    - A. ALL CLEAR: Indicates a safe environment. All activities may continue without interruption.
    - B. CAUTION: Normal energy shifts are occurring. All activities may continue without interruption.
    - C. WARNING: A significant amount of energy has moved into the area being monitored. All outdoor activities may continue, however all individuals involved should have a heightened awareness of potential dangerous weather conditions.
    - D. RED ALERT: All outdoor activities must cease. All individuals must seek shelter as described above immediately. Outdoor activities may not continue until an ALL CLEAR level is reached. Once a Red Alert level has been reached, the athletic training staff will utilize radios and/or cell phones to communicate with those teams and individuals involved in outdoor activities.

2. If the “flash-to-bang” interval is decreasing rapidly, and the storm is approaching your location, or if the “flash-to-bang” count approaches thirty (30) seconds, all outdoor and swimming pool intercollegiate athletic activities must cease. All persons must immediately leave the athletic site or the swimming pool area and seek shelter. The locker room shower and plumbing facilities *do not* provide safe shelter and should not be used during this time.

3. Stay away from tall individual trees, lone objects (e.g., lights or flag poles), metal objects (e.g., metal fences or bleachers), standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the tallest objects in a field. *Do not* take shelter under a single tall tree.

4. If there is no safe shelter within a reasonable distance, crouch in a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or in a dry ditch. Crouching with only your feet touching the ground and keeping you feet close together, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head to minimize your body’s surface area. *Do not lie flat!*

5. Do not remain in a boat or continue to swim in open water. Locate safe shelter as quickly as possible.

6. If you feel your hair stand on end or your skin tingle or hear crackling noises, immediately crouch (as in No. 3) to minimize your body surface area.

7. Allow 30 minutes to pass after the **last** sound of thunder or flash of lighting before resuming any intercollegiate athletic activity.

8. Do not use the telephone unless there is an emergency. People have been struck by lightning and killed while using landline telephone. Cellular or mobile phone may be used.

9. Lightning strike victims *do not* carry an electrical charge. CPR is safe for the first responder and has been shown to be effective in reviving lightning strike victims.

10. Pay much more attention to lightning threat than to rain. It need not be raining for lightning to strike; lightning can strike far away (10-15 miles) from the rain shaft.

The responsibility of removing a team or individual from an athletic site in the event of dangerous and imminent lightning activity is on the coach supervising the activity. The safety of any team or student-athlete ultimately rests with that coach. Whenever possible, the full-time certified athletic training staff will advise the coach supervising the activity as to the danger and proximity of lightning threat. However, the responsibility still remains with the supervising coaches to remove their teams or individuals from a field or event site.

With the information and background on lightning presented in this policy, the coach or athletic trainer, or both, can make an intelligent and safe decision regarding the removal of a team or individuals from an athletic site or the stopping of play during dangerous thunderstorm activity. In addition, any individuals who feel they are in danger of any lightning activity have the right to leave a field or event site to seek safe shelter.

The following is the recommendation from the Athletic Training Department for each athletic venue on the campus of Coastal Carolina University.

Practices:

A decision to delay or interrupt practice will be made by the certified athletic training staff member on site. If the decision is made to clear the field, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members should seek shelter at the recommended areas listed below.

Games:

Prior to kick-off, decision to delay the start of the game due to adverse weather conditions will be decided by athletic training staff on site with assistance from the game management officials. Once the game has begun, decision to postpone game due to adverse weather conditions will be decided by the head referee/umpire with input from the athletic training staff and game management officials. If the decision is made to clear the field, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members should seek shelter at the recommended areas listed below.

Brooks Stadium (football):

Practices: If the decision is made to clear the field, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members should retreat to the home locker room.

Games: If the decision is made to delay or postpone the game due to adverse weather conditions, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members from both teams should retreat to their designated locker rooms. All spectators will be escorted to safety located beneath the stands on the East and West sides of the stadium.

Soccer Stadium (men's and women's soccer):

Practices: If the decision is made to clear the field, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members should retreat to the visiting team locker room at Brooks Stadium.

Games: If the decision is made to delay or postpone game due to adverse weather conditions, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members from both teams should retreat to their designated locker rooms. All spectators will be escorted to safety beneath the stands on the East side of Brooks Stadium.

Charles L. Watson Stadium (baseball):

Practices: If decision is made to clear the field all athletes, coaches, and staff members should retreat to locker room connected to the home team dugout on the West side of the field.

Games: If the decision is made to delay or postpone game due to adverse weather conditions, then all athlete, coaches, and staff members from both teams should retreat to their designated locker rooms. All spectators will be escorted to safety beneath the stands on the East side of Brooks Stadium

Softball Stadium (softball):

Practices: If decision is made to clear the field all athletes, coaches, and staff members should retreat to designated locker room located in the Athletic Administration Building.

Games: If the decision is made to delay or postpone game due to adverse weather conditions, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members from both teams should retreat to their designated locker rooms. All spectators will be escorted to safety in the Williams-Brice Physical Education Building.

Billy Nichols Tennis Center (men's and women's tennis):

Practices: If decision is made to clear the courts all athletes, coaches, and staff members should retreat to the tennis house located adjacent to the courts.

Matches: If the decision is made to delay or postpone match due to adverse weather conditions, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members from both teams should retreat to the Athletic Administration Building. All spectators will be escorted to the Athletic Administration Building.

Joseph W. Holliday Tennis Practice Courts:

All individuals should retreat to the Williams-Brice Physical Education building.

Track and Field Complex (men's and women's track and field):

Practices: If the decision is made to clear the track all athletes, coaches, and staff members should retreat to the Athletic Administration Building.

Meets: : If the decision is made to delay or postpone meet due to adverse weather conditions, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members from both teams should retreat to the Athletic Administration Building. All spectators will be escorted to the Athletic Administration Building.

Fowler Farm Practice Complex (football and soccer):

Practices: : If the decision is made to clear the field, then all athletes, coaches, and staff members should retreat to their designated locker rooms.