

LEISD ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT – LIGHTNING POLICY

Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that can affect high school athletics. The National Severe Storms Laboratory estimates more and 100 fatalities and 400-500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes every year. While the probability of being struck by lightning is extremely low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and the proper safety precautions are not followed. Prevention and education are the keys to lightning safety and should begin long before any athletic event or practice.

Prevention starts with the staff athletic trainers obtaining weather reports before an activity begins, designating a weather watcher, and implementing an evacuation plan for event participants and spectators during a lightning storm. Most people have been educated that lightning is a dangerous phenomenon, but the seeking of safe shelter and the specific time one should evacuate to a safe location is generally not known.

Safe Shelter locations:

- Any **building** normally occupied that has plumbing or electrical wiring acts to electrically ground the structure. **Avoid taking showers during a lightning storm.**
- Any **vehicle** that is equipped with a hard metal roof and rolled up windows. It's not the rubber tires that make the vehicle safe. The hard metal roof dissipates the lightning strike around the vehicle. **Do not touch the outside of your vehicle during a lightning storm.**

AVOID: High places and open fields, isolated trees, gazebos, rain or picnic shelters, baseball/softball dugouts, communication towers, flagpoles, light poles, bleachers (metal or wood), metal fences, convertibles, golf carts, water (ocean, lakes, ponds, swimming pools, rivers, etc.).

Difference between a thunderstorm “Watch” and a “Warning”: ^{SEP}“**Watch**”: Conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in an area. “**Warning**”: Severe weather has been reported in an area.

Lightning awareness should be increased with the first flash of lightning or the first clap of thunder, no matter how far away. This activity must be treated as a wakeup call to those monitoring the inclement weather. The important aspect is to monitor how far away the lightning is occurring, and how fast the storm is approaching, relative to the distance of a safe shelter. A typical thunderstorm can travel up to 30 miles per hour. Lightning can and does, strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain shaft. ^{SEP}The existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not protection from lightning; it does not have to be raining for lightning to strike.

To provide the best safety for student athletes who participate outdoors, Little Elm ISD uses the *Pocket Perry Weather Monitoring System*:

Lobo Stadium, Little Elm HS, Walker MS & Strike MS: when a lightning strike occurs 10 miles or closer, one long horn will sound for all to clear the venue(s) and seek shelter immediately. During competitions an announcement must be made from the press boxes to have fans immediately return to their vehicles. Bring all referees, athletes & coaches from both teams indoor as quickly as possible.

An “All Clear Alert” will be given 30 minutes after with 3 short alert horn sounds (as long as there have not been any additional lightning strikes within the past 30 minutes).

All other locations use the *Pocket Perry Weather App* and watch for cell phone notifications. Additionally, Coaches should have their apps to include “My Location” for the most accurate updates especially when off campus.

Suspension of Play

Play is suspended when the long horn sounds. **This indicates the lightning is within a 10 mile range.**

Resumption of Play

Resumption of play can continue only when lightning has not been detected for at least 30 minutes. Each subsequent occurrence of lightning detected within the 30 minutes, will restart the 30-minute clock. Experts believe 30 minutes allows for thunderstorms to be approximately 10-12 miles from the area. This helps minimize the chances of a nearby lightning strike.

First Aid

In the unfortunate event that someone becomes struck by lightning, call 911 immediately. It is safe for an individual to perform CPR on a lightning victim because their body will no longer carry an electrical charge. Prompt, aggressive CPR increases the survival rate of victims of lightning strikes. If possible, move the victim to a safer location before starting CPR.

Proposed procedures for AWAY events if inclement weather is suspected:

1. Ask if there is a standing district policy regarding lightning safety.
2. If no policy is in effect, recommend the LEISD policy. Come to a consensus.
3. Notify officials and administrator on duty of the decided policy to implement prior to the event.
4. If no weather monitoring system at away venue, use your *Pocket Perry Weather App*.

For more information, see UIL Lightning Safety Guidelines. <http://www.uil-texas.org/health/info/lightning-safety> Revised 7/2021