

PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF THUNDER OR LIGHTNING

All coaches and officials should monitor the weather report on game day. The protocol below details the steps to be followed in the event of lightning and/or thunder at outdoor events. If the host site has a more stringent policy, including venues with lightening detection systems, that policy shall be adhered to.

Every venue should have an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safer areas, and should determine the amount of time needed to get everyone to a designated safer area. A designated safer area is a substantial building with plumbing and wiring where people live or work, such as a school, gymnasium, or library. An alternate safer place from the threat of lightning is a fully enclosed (not convertible or soft top) metal car or school bus.

If severe weather strikes prior to the beginning of the event, host site management shall be the decision-maker regarding the policy. If it occurs once the event has begun, the lead game official, site coordinator, or SONJ staff member shall be the decision-maker.

When one contest is suspended on a site due to thunder or lightning, all outdoor contests/activities on that site must be suspended.

When caught in a thunderstorm without the availability or time to reach a safe structure, the risk of injury may be minimized by seeking low ground and avoiding contact with anything made of metal. Avoid bleachers, metal fences, and standing pools of water.

* Avoid being the highest object. Seek a thick grove of small trees or bushes surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch.

* Avoid contact with anything that would be attractive to lightning. Stay away from freestanding trees, poles, antennas, towers, bleachers, baseball dugouts, metal fences, standing pools of water and golf carts.

* Crouch down with legs together, the weight on the balls of the feet, arms wrapped around knees, and head down with ears covered.

GUIDELINES WHEN THUNDER IS HEARD, OR LIGHTNING IS SEEN

Mandatory:

1. Suspend play, or delay the commencement of the contest, for 30 minutes. All participants and spectators shall vacate the outdoor venue to a designated safer area immediately.
 - a. A list of the closest safer areas should be announced and displayed at all outdoor venues.
 - b. Clear instructions should be announced over the public address system (if available) to guide participants and spectators to safer areas.
2. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning is witnessed prior to resuming play.
3. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count shall begin.
 - a. If, for example, the contest is suspended at 7:00 p.m. due to lightning strike, and then lightning is witnessed again at 7:25 p.m., the earliest the contest may resume is 7:55 p.m.

VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

4. If thunder or lightning persists, and access to the venue for warmups cannot resume 75 minutes after the initial suspension of play; the contest shall be postponed or cancelled. If participants can safely return to the field of play within 75 minutes, the players shall participate in brief warmup, and contest may resume.
 - a. Lead game official(s), site coordinator, and SONJ staff, and coaches may agree to alter #4 if all agree.
 - b. If agreement on how long to wait cannot be reached, then #4 will be used.