



Lightning Safety & Severe Weather Policy

The safety of players, coaches, management and spectators is the primary concern in any weather event that occurs during all matches. By understanding and following the information below, the safety of everyone shall be greatly increased. Ultimately the referee has the final say over delaying or restarting a match due to weather. Waiting to stop play or not waiting to start play may result in a serious injury or loss of life. Referees are expected to act responsibly when dealing with such events during matches they are controlling.

When lightning is detected, you can determine the distance of lightning in your area by counting the number of seconds between the flash and the first sound of the thunder and dividing by five (5). This will give you the distance in miles from your location. Remember, if you are in a higher elevation, the lightning can come upon you much quicker and your reaction time is greatly hindered.

30/30 Rule

When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If this time is thirty (30) seconds or less, seek proper shelter. Wait thirty (30) minutes or more after hearing the last thunder before leaving the shelter. If you cannot see the lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good back up rule.

Additional Information

Please note the following recommendations from Environment Canada:

The existence of blue sky and absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can and does strike as far as ten (10) miles away from the rain shaft. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike. Many lightning casualties occur in the beginning, as the storm approaches because many people ignore initial precursors of high winds, some rainfall and cloud cover. Generally the lightning threat diminishes with time after the last sound of thunder, but many persist for more than thirty (30) minutes.

Lightning can strike ahead of the parent cloud – take action even if the thunderstorm is not overhead.

Be aware of how close the lightning is occurring. The flash-to-bang method is the easiest and most convenient way to estimate how far away lightning is occurring. Thunder always accompanies lightning, even though its audible range can be diminished due to background noise in the immediate environment and its distance from the observer.

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 wake-up call to all. The most important aspect to monitor is how far away the lightning is occurring, and how fast the storm is approaching, relative to the distance of a safe shelter.

Recognize that personal observation of lightning may not be sufficient. Additional weather information may be required to ensure consistency, accuracy and adequate advance warning.

CSA Referees Committee