



**MICHIGAN STATE  
YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION**

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August 26, 2011

**To:** MSYSA League Presidents and Delegates  
**From:** Thomas K. Faro, MSYSA Executive Director  
**Re:** Severe Weather Safety

Dear MSYSA League Presidents and Delegates:

Attached, you will find a copy of US Soccer's Position Statement as it relates to severe weather. The attached position paper is fully endorsed and serves as MSYSA's policy with respect to lightening, wind storms, and other severe weather conditions.

It is important to note, from the information provided by Pullen Insurance Services, Inc., that all thunder storms produce lightening and are dangerous. If you hear thunder, you are in danger. The information that is attached states that anytime thunder is heard, a thunder storm is close enough to pose an immediate lightening threat to your location.

Per US Soccer's Position Statement, when you see lightening, count the time until you hear thunder. If this time is thirty (30) seconds or less, seek shelter. Wait thirty (30) minutes or more after hearing the last thunder before resuming activities.

It is strongly recommended, prior to practices that if thunderstorms are forecast, consider postponing activities early to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.

Please carefully review the information attached. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us at the MSYSA State Office.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. Faro  
MSYSA Executive Director  
[tfaro@michiganyouthsoccer.org](mailto:tfaro@michiganyouthsoccer.org)

cc.: MSYSA Board of Directors





To: Chair, State Referee Committee  
State Referee Administrators  
State Directors of Referee Instruction  
State Directors of Referee Assessment  
National Referees, Assessors, and Instructors

cc: State Presidents  
State Assoc. Exec. Dir.  
State Assoc. Office Mgrs.  
Daniel T. Flynn  
Julie Ilacqua

From: Alfred Kleinaitis  
Manager of Referee Development and Education

Re: Dealing with Severe Weather

Date: September 23, 2003 (REVISED OCTOBER 6, 2003)

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This position paper provides basic guidelines for dealing with lightning, windstorms, and other severe weather conditions. The peak season for severe weather occurs in the United States between May and August, typically in the late afternoon and early evening.

#### 1. Lightning

- a. Recognizing the threat
  - (1) Apply the 30-30 rule  
When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If this time is 30 seconds or less, seek proper shelter. If you can't see the lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good back-up rule. Wait 30 minutes or more after hearing the last thunder before leaving shelter.
  - (2) Know and heed warning systems and community rules  
Many communities or park systems have lightning detection and warning systems. Use this information and obey the rules established by the community or park system.
  - (3) Know and apply the rules or procedures established by the competition authority
  - (4) Minimize the risk of being struck  
Referees must protect the safety of all participants by stopping game activities quickly, so that participants and spectators may retire to a safer place before the lightning threat becomes significant. Remember, if you can hear the thunder, you are within reach of lightning.
- b. Seeking proper shelter
  - (1) No place outside is safe near thunderstorms
  - (2) The best shelter is a large, fully enclosed, substantially constructed building. A vehicle with a solid metal roof and metal sides is a reasonable second choice.
- c. If there is no proper shelter, avoid the most dangerous locations:
  - (1) Higher elevations
  - (2) Wide open areas, including fields
  - (3) Tall isolated objects, such as trees, poles, or light posts.
  - (4) Unprotected open buildings
  - (5) Rain shelters
  - (6) Bus stops
  - (7) Metal fences and metal bleachers
- d. If you cannot avoid these locations, crouch down on the balls of your feet, with your head tucked into your chest and your hands over your ears.
- e. If someone is hit  
All deaths from lightning result from cardiac arrest and stopped breathing. CPR and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, respectively, are the recommended first aid. Referees should become involved in such assistance only if they have proper training.
- f. Remain calm. A calm official will often be able to prevent panic by young players.

**NO LIGHTNING SAFETY GUIDELINES WILL GIVE 100% GUARANTEED TOTAL SAFETY,  
BUT THESE STEPS WILL HELP YOU AVOID THE VAST MAJORITY OF LIGHTNING CASUALTIES.**

2. Other types of severe weather

a. Severe storms or tornadoes

Obey local rules and heed warnings (meaning that a severe storm or tornado has been sighted). Clear the field and seek proper shelter immediately – see above. Remember, according to standard weather warning terminology a "warning" represents a more immediately likely occurrence than a "watch."

b. Hurricanes

There is usually plenty of advance notice, so games will probably have been cancelled. Look for warning signs.

c. Hail

Stop the game, clear the field, and seek proper shelter – see above.

**NO SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY GUIDELINES WILL GIVE 100% GUARANTEED TOTAL SAFETY, BUT THESE STEPS WILL HELP YOU AVOID THE VAST MAJORITY OF CASUALTIES.**

If there is a possibility of severe weather, the referee and assistant referees should discuss these guidelines in their pregame meeting and ensure that all officials have a clear understanding of their respective duties. Referees in particular should clearly identify what assistance they expect in detecting and bringing to their immediate attention any dangerous weather conditions which may not be directly visible to them. If such conditions develop only after a match has begun, the referee should take the first stoppage opportunity to quickly review these matters with the assistant referees. A brief word to the coaches regarding steps the referee will take to ensure player safety in threatening weather conditions would be useful.

## Know what to do if someone is struck by lightning.

Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge, are safe to handle, and need immediate medical attention. Cardiac arrest is the immediate cause of death in lightning fatalities. Some deaths can be prevented if the victim immediately receives the proper first aid.

- ▶ **Call for help.** Call 9-1-1 or your local ambulance service.
- ▶ **Give first aid.** Check the victim's pulse and breathing. Begin CPR if necessary. An Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) may also be useful if one is available.
- ▶ **If possible, move the victim to a safer place.** An active thunderstorm is still dangerous. Don't let the rescuers become victims. Lightning CAN strike the same place twice.

## Stay informed, listen to NOAA Weather Radio!

There are an estimated 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes in the United States each year. While the National Weather Service issues severe thunderstorm watches and warnings for storms that produce damaging wind or hail, watches and warnings are NOT issued for lightning. However, the sound of thunder should serve as an immediate warning of the lightning danger.

As a further safety measure, officials at outdoor events may want to have a tone-alert NOAA Weather Radio. The radio will allow you to monitor any short-term forecasts for changing weather conditions, and the tone-alert feature can automatically alert you in case a severe thunderstorm watch or warning is issued. To find your nearest NOAA weather radio transmitter, go to [www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr) and click on "Station Listing and Coverage."

A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM is defined as a storm that produces wind gusts of 58 mph or greater, and/or hail 3/4 of an inch or larger in diameter.

A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH is issued when conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop.

A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING is issued when severe weather is imminent.



Lightning Safety Awareness Week is the last full week of June. For additional information on lightning or lightning safety, visit NOAA's lightning safety web site.

[www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov)

## Lightning Kills... Play It Safe!

Remember that all thunderstorms produce lightning and all lightning can be deadly to those outside.

U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NOAA's National Weather Service



This safety guide has been prepared to help coaches and sports officials recognize the dangers of lightning and take appropriate safety precautions.



National Lightning Safety Institute

NOAA PA-2006-5

## Coaches & Sports Officials Guide to

# Lightning Safety



## Lightning... The Underrated Killer!



A Safety Guide

## Lightning Kills... Play it Safe!

Each year in the United States, more than 400 people are struck by lightning. On average, about 70 people are killed and many others suffer permanent neurological disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be avoided if proper precautions are taken. When thunderstorms threaten, coaches and sports officials must not let the desire to start or complete an athletic activity hinder their judgment when the safety of participants and spectators is in jeopardy.

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## Know the basic facts about lightning and its dangers.

- ▶ **All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous.** In an average year, lightning kills more people in the U.S. than either tornadoes or hurricanes.
- ▶ **Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall.** Many deaths from lightning occur ahead of storms because people wait too long before seeking shelter, or after storms because people return outside too soon.

- ▶ **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.

- ▶ **Lightning leaves many victims with permanent disabilities.** While only a small percentage of lightning strike victims die, many survivors must learn to live with very serious, lifelong disabilities.

## Avoid the lightning threat.

- ▶ **Plan ahead.** Have a lightning safety plan. Know where people will go for safety and how much time it will take for them to get there. Have specific guidelines for suspending the event or activity so that everyone has time to reach safety. Follow the plan without exception.

- ▶ **Postpone activities.** Prior to a practice or event, check the latest forecast. If thunderstorms are forecast, consider postponing activities early to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.

- ▶ **Monitor the weather.** Watch and listen for clues of impending danger. Look for darkening skies, flashes of lightning, or increasing wind, which may be signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm. Listen for thunder.

- ▶ **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, suspend your activity immediately and instruct everyone to get to a safe place. Substantial buildings provide the best protection. Once inside, stay off corded phones and away from any wiring or plumbing. Avoid sheds, small or open shelters, dugouts, bleachers, or grandstands. If a sturdy building is not nearby, a hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed will offer good protection.

- ▶ **Stay inside.** Do not resume activities until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder was heard.

## What you should do if you can't get to a safe place.

Being outside during a thunderstorm puts you at risk of being struck by lightning. The measures listed below will reduce that risk somewhat, but are no substitute for getting to a safe place.

- ▶ **Avoid open areas and stay away from isolated tall trees, towers, or utility poles.** Lightning tends to strike the taller objects.

- ▶ **Stay away from metal bleachers, backstops, and fences.** Lightning can travel long distances through metal.

- ▶ **Spread out.** This reduces the risk of multiple lightning casualties.

## If you feel your hair stand on end, lightning is about to strike.

There may be little or nothing you can do to keep from being struck by lightning. As a last desperate resort:

- ▶ **Crouch down on the balls of your feet, put your hands over your ears, and bend your head down.** Make yourself as small a target as possible and minimize your contact with the ground.

- ▶ **Do not lie flat on the ground.**

