

Strathdale SC Lightning Policy



PURPOSE

This policy provides a guide for the suspension and resumption of outdoor activity when there is a risk of lightning. Its implementation will improve the safety of those attending football (soccer) matches who are frequently outdoors in a variety of weather conditions and to minimise the risk of injury during times of high lightning activity.

GENERAL

Lightning presents a real risk of death or serious injury to outdoor sports participants. It accounts for around 10 deaths and over 100 injuries in Australia each year. Lightning does not need to directly strike a person to cause death or serious injury. A person touching, or close to, an object struck by lightning may be affected by a side-flash or transferred energy (for example, being within 20m of a tree struck by lightning is considered to be in the lethal zone).

Participants must not let the desire to start or complete a match or training session hinder their judgment when the safety of players, coaches or spectators is at risk.

Criteria for suspension and resumption of activities

Lightning can strike more than 10km from the edge of a thunderstorm. It is generally agreed that 10km is the minimum safe distance from a storm. The 30/30 rule is used to serve as a guide for the suspension and safe resumption of activities.

The first part of the 30/30 rule is determined by counting the seconds from when the lightning flash was seen to when the thunder is heard. Sound travels at about 1 kilometre every 3 seconds, so a 30 second interval means the storm is 10km away. Coaches or their nominated responsible person should be monitoring the storm's approach and as the flash to bang count nears 30 seconds, people at risk should already be seeking safe shelter. A "flash to bang" count of 30 seconds or less requires immediate and urgent evacuation to safety.

The second part of the 30/30 rule provides the criteria for resuming activities. It is recommended that the storm be 20km away before it is considered safe. A typical storm moves at 40km/h, so waiting 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning seen provides the 20km safe distance.

It is important to emphasize that blue sky and the absence of rain are not adequate reasons to ignore the 30/30 rule. Many victims are struck before the storm actually arrives because they wait too long to seek shelter. This is the proverbial "bolt from the blue".

The 30/30 rule is not an absolute rule. A storm may move very quickly, or not generate any lightning or thunder until it is very close or topographical or wind conditions may prevent sound from travelling to your position. It is important that coaches ensure weather conditions are monitored and be alert to the possibility of the above occurring.

Identification of safe structures

No place is absolutely safe from lightning strikes, but some places are much safer than others. Each location must identify its safe areas and ensure that coaches are aware of them.

SAFER areas include:

- Enclosed vehicles with windows closed (car, bus, tractor with cab) Do not touch metal parts
- Substantial enclosed buildings
- Low ground, sheltering in clumps of low bushes
- Trees of uniform height

UNSAFE areas include:

- High ground
- Open ground
- Water
- Isolated or tall trees
- Near outdoor metal structures such as fences, gates, poles, seating
- Insubstantial structures such as picnic sheds and shade shelters

If you are caught outside during a storm and feel your hair stand on end or hear buzzing/crackling noise in the air, you are within the field of charge of a lightning strike. Remove metal objects (keys, badges, belts etc), crouch down with feet together, head down and hands over your ears. It is safer to adopt this position if outdoors than to be in one of the unsafe situations listed above.

First Aid

Victims of lightning strikes are safe to handle- they do not “retain charge”. First aiders must ensure they do not become another casualty- move the victim to a safer location. Effects of lightning strike include cardiac and respiratory arrest caused by disruption of the brains’ control centres. CPR or EAR should be given as required. It is important that even people who do not show signs of any symptoms immediately after the strike receive medical attention as some effects may not be immediately obvious.

Lightning Safety Tips

- Check the forecast and watch the sky; Darkening skies, flashes of lightning, or increasing wind may indicate an approaching storm.
- Use the 30/30 Lightning Rule; (see above)
- Count seconds between 'flash' and 'bang' and seek shelter when the time is less than 30 seconds.
- Find safe shelter; Sturdy buildings are the safest place to be during lightning storms. Avoid sheds. Staying in a car with windows closed also offers some protection.
- Avoid isolated trees or other tall objects; it’s better to seek shelter under a thick growth of relatively small trees.
- Don't wait for rain to seek shelter.
- Get out of the water; Water is a great conductor of electricity.
- Avoid any metal objects; such as helmets.
- Spread out and do not stay in a group
- Never lie flat on the ground during a lightning storm.
- As a last resort, assume the lightning-safe position. If you are caught in a lightning storm and if you feel your hair stand on end, your skin tingle, or you hear crackling noises, crouch on the ground with your weight on the balls of the feet, your feet together, your head lowered and ears covered. Some experts recommend placing your hands on your forehead and your elbows on your knees to create a path for lightning to travel to the ground through your extremities rather than through your core (heart).

NOTE

Please note that the club defers to the relevant Rules of Competition in relation to Extreme Weather for all affected fixtures. Specifically, in that FV and/or the Match Official may postpone, delay or abandon any Competition Fixture due to weather, pitch conditions such as but not limited to excessive heat/humidity, lightning or rain that may endanger participants health and/or safety.

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