

DYBA Lightning Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Lightning kills about 150 people each year in the United States; about 10 of those are in Illinois. Most of these are not people who are tempting fate by standing outside in the middle of an active storm. Lightning strikes can occur when no storm is evident, and some people are standing under clear skies when they are struck.

In 2002 DYBA got together with the Deerfield Park Foundation, AYSO, Deerfield Rotary Club and Deerfield Optimist Club to purchase a lightning prediction system to be installed at the golf course and at all parks in town. The system is maintained by Deerfield Park District personnel.

System Description

The lightning prediction system from [ThorGuard](#) (Model L150) consists of two lightning detectors with alarm units for each park. Each detector has an effective radius of 3.5 miles and they are located at the Deerfield Golf Course and at the Deerfield Village Garage on Elm St.

Each prediction unit sends alarms to the parks nearest to it. The golf course sensor sets off alarms at the golf course and at Clavey, Jaycee, Woodland and Mitchell Parks. The Elm St. sensor sets off alarms at South Park, Wilmot, Shepard, Maplewood, Jewett, Kipling, Walden, and Briarwood Parks.

It is possible that one sensor will see lightning conditions before the other and the alarms will not be sounded at the same time. Since most storms move from southwest to northeast, it is common for the alarms connected to the golf course sensor to go off before the alarms connected to the Elm St. sensor.

The ThorGuard system is tested by the Park District on a weekly basis to insure that lightning conditions detected at the sensors reach all of the parks' alarms.

Lightning Prediction

The ThorGuard system makes lightning predictions. This differs from lightning detection, which senses lightning strikes. ThorGuard predicts future lightning strikes by sensing the ionization in the air. When ionization increases to a level that supports lightning strikes, the alarm is sounded. Once the predictor

senses conditions that favor lightning, there is often a flash of lightning in the area within 10 minutes.

Ionization of the air occurs even when there is no active storm. There have been reports of lightning traveling through the atmosphere for distances of up to 20 miles before coming to earth in an area that may not even have clouds above it. This is called “Bolts Out of the Blue” and can only be avoided by using a lightning prediction system. If the lightning predictor sets off the alarm on a sunny day, it is not malfunctioning. There is a chance of being struck by lightning if the alarm is not heeded.

Policies

There are three things that can cause a lightning alert: seeing visible lightning in the sky, hearing audible thunder, or an alarm from the lightning prediction system. Because of the way the lightning prediction system is partitioned, hearing a lightning alarm from another field when there is no alarm at the present field shall be treated as if the alarm occurred at the present field.

The ThorGuard device sounds an alarm with a loud horn that lasts for 60 seconds and a flashing strobe light. The strobe continues to flash for the duration of the lightning condition. When the danger has passed, the device signals an All-Clear condition by pulsing the horn three times for 15 seconds each, and the strobe light stops flashing.

The DYBA policy for lightning storms requires that all people, including players, coaches and spectators, immediately leave the field area and seek protection under cover if lightning is indicated. Games or practices that are interrupted by a lightning condition may be continued only once the All-Clear signal sounds, depending on different leagues' scheduling policies.

If a team arrives at a field for a practice or a game during a lightning alert, with the ThorGuard system flashing the strobe light, everyone must stay under cover until the All-Clear signal.

This policy applies to all games and practices that occur under the auspices of DYBA, including travel home games and tournaments. DYBA travel teams that play at other fields shall also abide by this lightning policy even if the home team does not have a similar policy.