

HOWARD COUNTY OFFICIALS' LIGHTNING POLICY



LIGHTNING ALERTING SYSTEM

For the safety of its visitors the Department of Recreation & Parks has installed lightning alerting systems in the following parks.

1. Blandair Regional Park
2. Cedar Lane Regional Park
3. Centennial Park
4. Rockburn Branch Park
5. Savage Park
6. Schooley Mill Park
7. Troy Park at Elkridge
8. Western Regional Park

Operation

Each system is equipped with a horn and strobe light. The horn and strobe light will activate for 15-seconds once it senses lightning 10-miles from the park. At that time, all activities (including games and practices) will cease so that park visitors may seek shelter.

Once lightning is no longer a threat, the horn will sound in three, 5-second bursts. Activities, games and practices can then resume.

Sheltering

A safe place to shelter is a building with a roof and four walls (ex: a restroom). Sheltering in a vehicle is another option (but it is not as safe as a solid structure). **DO NOT** take shelter under a pavilion as it does not provide protection against lightning.

An indoor facility is recommended as the safest protective shelter; however, if an indoor facility is not available, an automobile is a relatively safe alternative. Otherwise, the following guidelines are recommended:

- **Avoid standing under large trees and telephone poles.**
- **If the only alternative is a tree, choose a small tree in a wooded area that is not on a hill.**
- **As a last alternative, find a ravine or valley.**
- **In all instances outdoors, assume a crouched position, and avoid standing water and metal objects.**

Safety Information (for outdoor locations not listed above)

****If thunder/lightning can be heard and/or seen, STOP YOUR GAME AND SEEK PROTECTIVE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY.****

****In situations where thunder and/or lightning may or may not be present, yet you feel your hair stand on end and skin tingle, immediately assume the following position:**

Drop to your knees, place your hands/arms on your legs and lower your head. Do NOT lie flat on the ground.**

In the event that either situation occurs, allow **30 minutes** to pass after the last sound of thunder and /or lightning prior to resuming play.

The National Weather Service has stated that lightning can strike up to a distance of 10 miles with storms traveling at a speed of 50-miles per hour. However, thunder can be heard only within a distance of 8 miles. Therefore, if you hear thunder and/or see lightning, you are in immediate danger and should seek protective shelter in an indoor facility **AT ONCE**. Please see more information about sheltering listed above.

The most dangerous storms give little or no warning; you may not hear or see thunder or lightning. Up to 40% of all lightning is **NOT** accompanied by thunder, and 20 – 40% of all thunder cannot be heard because of atmospheric disturbances—thus the term “Silent Killer”. At times the only natural warning that precedes a strike is feeling your hair standing on end and skin tingling.

If this occurs, you are in immediate danger of being struck by lightning and should drop to the ground immediately. Assume a crouched position—in the event of a ground strike, lying flat would increase the body surface area that would be exposed to the current traveling through the ground.

If you see lightning coming, you will not have time to act before it strikes—the lightning we see flashing is actually the return stroke flashing upward from the ground to the clouds. **When you see lightning strike, it has already hit.**

You will never see the bolt that hits you.

Use this information to minimize the risk of injury or death from a strike!