



## Lightning Safety Policy

### **Policy Overview**

Lightning is a dangerous phenomenon. Athletic teams that practice and compete outdoors are at risk when the weather is inclement. The Damascus Sports Association (DSA) has developed the following lightning safety policy, which must be followed to minimize the risk of injury from lightning strikes to its athletes, coaches, and fans. This policy will be strictly enforced, as the safety of our players is paramount.

Coaches, athletic trainers, athletes, administrators, and contest officials shall be educated regarding thunderstorm development signs.

### **Monitor Weather Patterns**

Before an activity or event, organizers should listen to the latest forecast to determine the likelihood of thunderstorms. Many good sources of up-to-date weather information, including NOAA Weather Radio, are available. If thunderstorms are forecast, organizers should consider canceling or postponing the activity or event. In some cases, the event can be moved indoors. Officials should monitor weather conditions, radar, and lightning detection technology for developing or approaching storms.

### **Lightning Safety**

Lightning awareness should be heightened at the first flash of lightning, clap of thunder, and/or other signs of an impending storm, such as increasing winds or darkening skies, no matter how far away. Lightning safety experts suggest that if you hear thunder, prepare for evacuation. Consider suspending activities and evacuating to designated safer locations if you see lightning. For large-scale events, continuous weather monitoring should occur from the time pre-event activities occur and throughout the event.

According to the National Weather Service, a significant lightning threat extends outward from the base of a thunderstorm cloud about 6 to 10 miles. It's important to account for the time everyone will take to safety. Here are some criteria that could be used to stop activities.

- **If you see lightning.** The ability to see lightning varies depending on the time of day, weather conditions, and obstructions such as trees, mountains, etc. In clear air, and especially at night, lightning can be seen from storms more than 10 miles away, provided that obstructions don't limit the view of the thunderstorm.
- **If you hear thunder.** Thunder can usually be heard for about 10 miles without background noise. Traffic, wind, and precipitation may limit the ability to hear thunder to less than 10 miles. If you hear thunder, though, it's a safe bet that the storm is within ten miles.
- **If the skies look threatening,** thunderstorms can develop directly overhead, and some storms may develop lightning as they move into an area.

### **Responsibility**

The head coach of the respective DSA team(s) is responsible for promptly removing athletes from a practice or playing area. If the head coach is absent, an assistant coach will assume responsibility. If no coaches are present, the parents of the players will be responsible for evacuating the area.

### **Shelter**

There is no safe place outside when a thunderstorm is in the area. Stop the activity immediately and get to a safe place immediately. Substantial buildings with wiring and plumbing provide the greatest amount of protection. Office buildings, schools, and homes are examples of buildings that would offer good protection. Once inside, stay away from windows and doors and anything that conducts electricity, such as corded phones, wiring, plumbing, and anything connected to these. Note that small outdoor buildings, including dugouts, rain shelters, sheds, etc., are NOT SAFE. Without a substantial building, a hard-topped metal vehicle with closed windows provides good protection.

### **Thirty-Minute Rule**

Because electrical charges can linger in clouds after a thunderstorm has seemingly passed, experts agree that to resume athletics activities, lightning safety experts recommend waiting 30 minutes after both the last sound of thunder and after the last flash of lightning is at least six miles away and moving away from the venue.

If lightning is seen without hearing thunder, lightning may be out of range and less likely to be a significant threat. At night, be aware that lightning can be visible at a much greater distance than during the day, as clouds are being lit from the inside by lightning. This greater distance may mean lightning is no longer a significant threat. At night, use the sound of thunder and the lightning channel to decide when to reset the 30-minute return-to-play clock before resuming outdoor athletics activities.

### **Flash to Bang Method**

Lightning safety experts strongly recommend that, at minimum, by the time the weather monitor observes 30 seconds between seeing the lightning flash and hearing its associated thunder or by the time the leading edge of the storm is within six miles of the venue, all individuals should have left the athletics site and be within a safer structure or location.

To estimate the distance between your location and a lightning flash, use the "Flash to Bang" method: If you observe lightning, count the number of seconds until you hear thunder. Divide the number of seconds by five to obtain the distance in miles. Example: If you see lightning and it takes 10 seconds to hear the thunder, then the lightning is 2 miles away.

If Thunder is heard...	The Lightning is...
5 seconds after a flash	1 mile away
10 seconds after a flash	2 miles away
15 seconds after a flash	3 miles away
20 seconds after a flash	4 miles away
25 seconds after a flash	5 miles away
30 seconds after a flash	6 miles away
35 seconds after a flash	7 miles away
40 seconds after a flash	8 miles away

Because lightning can strike up to 10 miles from a storm, you should seek safe shelter when you hear thunder or see lightning. If the time between the lightning flash and the rumble of thunder is 30 seconds or less, get to a safe location.

### **Disciplinary Actions**

The responsibility of removing a team or individual from an athletic site in the event of lightning activity is on the coach supervising the activity. The safety of all team members rests with that coach. Coaches who do not comply with the above are subject to immediate disciplinary action by the DSA Board of Directors.

**The DSA Board approved this policy of Directors with a majority vote. 09.2023**