



Lightning Safety/ Severe Weather Policy - Football Ontario

"When you hear the roar, don't ignore!"

Player, coach, team management, and spectator safety is our utmost concern during any weather event that occurs during all practices and games sanctioned by Football Ontario. To greatly increase everyone's safety, understanding and adhering to the following guidelines is important. The final decision regarding the delay or resumption of a practice or game due to weather rests with the referee or the designated authority. A failure to stop practice or a game, or a premature start may result in serious injury or fatality. All responsible parties are expected to act diligently when such situations arise during activities they oversee.

Remember, if thunder is audible, lightning is a threat. Take cover immediately upon hearing thunder. A surprising number of people are struck by lightning before and after a thunderstorm than during it. Stay indoors for at least 30 minutes after the last heard thunder.

Additional Information

Please note these recommendations from Environment Canada:

- Begin your day by checking the weather forecast. If thunderstorms are predicted, avoid scheduling or participating in outdoor activities during that time, or make alternate plans. Identify safe places nearby and calculate how long it will take to reach them.
- Keep an eye on the sky for developing thunderstorms and listen for thunder. Get to safety as soon as thunder is heard. If thunder can be heard, you are at risk of a lightning strike.
- Seek a safe place. This is a fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do not provide lightning protection. If no sturdy building is close, enter a vehicle with a metal roof and close all windows.
- Avoid handling electrical equipment, phones, or plumbing. These are all electrical conductors. Activities such as using a computer, playing a wired video game, taking a bath or touching a metal window frame increase your risk of a lightning strike. Use only battery-operated devices.

- If you're caught outdoors far from shelter, avoid tall objects, including trees, poles, wires, and fences. Seek shelter in a low-lying area but be alert to potential flooding.

Keep track of how close lightning is striking. Thunder always accompanies lightning, but it might not always be heard due to environmental noise and distance.

Large groups, such as football teams, require more time for a proper evacuation. As the time requirement changes, the distance at which lightning is noted and considered a threat should also increase.

Know the closest “safe structure or location” to the field or playing area and how long it will take to get there. Safe structures or locations are:

- Any building normally or frequently occupied by people, i.e., a building with plumbing and/or electrical wiring that electrically grounds the structure. Avoid using shower facilities for safe shelter and refrain from using showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm.

If no frequently inhabited, sturdy building is within a reasonable distance, a vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled-up windows can provide some level of safety. It's the hard metal roof that makes a vehicle safe, as it disperses the lightning strike around the vehicle. Do not touch the sides of any vehicle!

If no safe structure or location is nearby, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize contact with the ground and your body's surface area as lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. Do not lie flat! If unable to reach a safe shelter, avoid being the highest object in a field and stay away from the tallest trees or objects (such as light poles or flag poles), metal objects (like fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Do not take shelter under a single, tall tree.

Avoid using the telephone, except in emergencies. People have been struck by lightning while using a land-line telephone. Cellular phones or portable remote phones are safer alternatives if used within a safe structure or location and if all other precautions are adhered to.

Before resuming any athletic activity, practice or game, wait at least thirty (30) minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder.

First aid for lightning victims

Swift, assertive CPR has proven very effective for the survival of lightning strike victims.

- Lightning victims do not retain an electrical charge and can be handled safely.
- Call for help. Victims may have burns or be in shock and should receive medical attention immediately. Call 9-1-1 or your local ambulance service.
- Administer first aid. If breathing has stopped, administer CPR. Use an automatic external defibrillator if available.

For additional information, the following websites are helpful:

<http://www.ec.gc.ca/foudre-lightning/default.asp?lang=En&n=57412D67-1>
www.weatheroffice.gc.ca/lightning