

# University of Waterloo Athletics and Recreational Services Severe Weather Guidelines

## *Introduction*

These guidelines and recommendations are designed to give you and all of the participants you supervise a safe method of evaluation and practices should you encounter severe weather, in particular lightning. You will be required to follow and implement these practices for the safety of all to minimize your exposure to these dangerous natural elements.

## *Lightning Guidelines*

- 1. Remember the phrase “When thunder roars, head indoors”. If you see lightning or hear thunder, the impending weather is close enough to cause you, your players and staff harm. Practice should be stopped and players instructed to head indoors.**
- 2. When considering resuming activities ideally wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field.**
- 3. More info is available at:**  
<http://www.ec.gc.ca/foudre-lightning/default.asp?lang=En&n=159F8282-1>

## *Safety Guidelines*

1. Know where the closest ‘safe location’ is to the field. This is a building normally occupied by people with plumbing and electrical wiring that acts to ground the structure. For the CIF fields it is the CIF main building complex.
2. If there is no building or you are too far from the structure any vehicle with a hard metal roof and rolled up windows can provide a measure of safety. Do not touch the sides of the vehicles.
3. The existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not guarantees that lightning will not strike. At least 10 percent of lightning occurs when there is no rainfall and when blue sky is often visible somewhere in the sky, especially with summer thunderstorms. Lightning can, and does, strike as far as 10 (or more) miles away from the rain shaft.
4. If no safe structure is available assume a crouched position with only the balls of the feet on the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize your body’s surface area and contact with the ground. Stay away from the tallest trees, metal objects, pools of water and open fields. If possible find a small grove of trees surrounded by taller trees.
5. People who feel their hair stand on end or skin tingle should immediately crouch as above.
6. Do not use showers or plumbing facilities or landline phones except in emergencies. Cellular phones are a safer alternative.

*Journal of Athletic Training* 2000;35(4):471–477  
2011-12 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook, 21<sup>st</sup> Ed. USA.



## ***Lightning Protocol and Procedures- Practices***

1. Facility Staff identify or are alerted to the potential for thunder and lightning in the area
2. A reminder is sent to coaches with teams using the UW CIF Fields prior to or during practices, when possible.
3. Coaches and staff on-field should watch for and identify any lightning and or thunder
  - a. If viewed or heard per guidelines, coaches, as leaders of UW student-athletes, should stop practice and remove the team from danger to the CIF building.
4. If alerted by coaches or staff, Facility staff will close the UW fields from further activity.
5. Return to the field should only take place a minimum of 30 minutes after the last lightning or thunder.

UW Therapy staff is directed to remove themselves from the fields if they feel that it is unsafe to remain. Before leaving they should inform the coach that they are leaving practice. Remember lightning can strike from many miles away.

**“When thunder roars, head indoors.”**

## ***Lightning Protocol and Procedures- Games (Per OUA Guidelines)***

Established lightning specific Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

- o Identify specific criteria for suspending activity, with activity being resumed after 30 minutes in which no lightning is detected and no thunder has been heard
  - Facility staff reopen the fields
- o Established lightning-specific chain of command, including a person with unchallengeable authority to suspend activity and determine that it is safe to resume play. This designated person should not be a referee/official, coach or therapist. They should be an identified university employee with responsibility for the event.
  - Tier 1- FB- Brian Bourque, Ari Grossman
  - Tier 2/3- Rugby, Soccer, FH, XC- Chris Gilbert or staff listed above
- o A reliable means of monitoring local weather
  - Environment Canada website for weather warnings and lightning maps
- o Identification of safe locations to seek shelter, which will include buildings that will hold all individuals, building structures with plumbing and wiring, solid structures with concrete foundation or all-metal vehicles
  - CIF main building
- o Identification of all parties who need to be notified in the case of stoppage of play
  - Referees, coaches, student trainers, staff
- o Education to all staff members to ensure they are comfortable to remove themselves from the venue if they are concerned about their personal safety without repercussions

