

# Lightning Safety Guidelines for Pearland ISD

Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect interscholastic athletes. Within the United States, the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) estimates more than 100 fatalities and 400-500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes every year. While the probability of being struck by lightning is extremely low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and the proper safety precautions are not followed.

**Weather Sentry** – An internet based weather reporting system that utilizes GPS to record active lightning strikes.

1. When a suspicious cloud/storm approaches, the athletic trainer/ head coach, assistant coach or administrator will monitor Weather Sentry.
2. Once lightning strikes within 8 – 15 miles, coaches will be alerted and can continue outside activities but monitor nearby lightning.
3. Once lightning strikes within 8 miles, all outdoor activities will be suspended and everyone will seek shelter immediately.

**Flash to Bang** – In the absence of weather monitoring technologies such as Weather Sentry, flash to bang method will be used. This method estimates the distance of lightning by counting the seconds upon seeing the “flash” of lightning and hearing the “bang” from the thunder. The amount of seconds should be divided by 5 to determine the distance of lightning in miles.

1. When a suspicious cloud/storm approaches, the athletic trainer/ head coach, assistant coach or administrator will monitor the approaching storm using the flash to Bang Method.
2. Once the flash to bang count reaches 40 seconds or less, all outdoor activities will be suspended and everyone will seek shelter immediately.

## **Evacuation Procedures**

The students should be evacuated to a safe shelter. Staying away from tall or individual trees, lone objects (light or flag poles), metal objects, and open fields. Examples of safe shelter are a bus, dressing room, or other building with 4 walls with electrical wiring and/or plumbing. A dug out or awning are not considered safe shelter. Administrators should evacuate spectators from the stadium.

## **Resume Practice and Competition**

Once a game or practice has been suspended the storm should continue to be monitored. No contest or practice should be resumed until:

1. The lightning has moved out of the 8 mile radius for 30 minutes on the Weather Sentry system.
2. No lightning strike has been detected within 8 miles for 30 consecutive minutes using the Flash Bang method.

Although the home team is responsible for each game or match, it should be noted that the athletic trainer, head coach and/or administrator is wholly responsible for the safety and well-being of adults and students in his/her charge. If no policy is in effect at the out of town site or the out-of-town site has lesser guidelines than Pearland ISD, it is recommended that the Pearland ISD guidelines be followed.