

US Soccer's Lightning and Severe Weather Guidelines

Lightning is one of the top ten causes of sudden death in sport.¹ As the majority of soccer is played outdoors, lightning and severe weather pose a threat to player health and safety. U.S. Soccer's Recognize to Recover program, with the help of the Korey Stringer Institute, provides these guidelines for responding quickly and safely when lightning and severe weather threaten practice or a game. When it comes to making decisions to suspend or cancel play due to weather condition, coaches, officials, athletic trainers and administrators all share responsibility. These same individuals should be aware of close safe shelter locations and know how to evaluate when it is safe to resume play after severe weather leaves an area.

1. Casa DJ, Guskiewicz KM, Anderson SA, et al. National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement: Preventing Sudden Death in Sports. J Athl Train. 2012;47(1):96-118.

RECOGNIZE

- Consult the National Weather Service, the Storm Prediction Center or local media outlets for severe weather watches and warnings.
- Safe locations should be available with enough capacity to hold all who may need safe shelter. A primary location would be a fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing. A fully enclosed vehicle with a solid metal roof, like a school bus, would be a safe secondary option. Open fields and open-sided shelters are not safe. If there are no adequate safe shelters close to the field, play must be stopped well in advance of the storm to allow everyone to travel to a safe place or their home.
- **If it's been half an hour since thunder, it's safe to go outdoors. Outdoor activity may resume 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or flash of lightning. The 30-minute clock restarts every time lightning flashes or thunder sounds.**

Warning signs of a lightning strike:

- Feeling the hair stand on end
- Skin tingling
- Hearing crackling noises

If these occur, assume the lightning safe position:

- Crouch on the ground as low as you can
- Put all your weight on the balls of your feet
- Keep your feet together
- Lower head and cover your ears
- *Do not* lie flat on the ground

If someone is injured by a lightning strike, follow these emergency management steps:

- Call 911 and alert emergency medical responders (EMS).
- Determine area is safe before going to help victims. Then move them to a safe area.
- Initiate CPR on victims who are unconscious, not breathing or have no pulse. Use an automated external defibrillator (AED) if one is available.