

The School District of Lee County

Emergency Action Plan for Inclement Weather

On the average, lightning kills 100 people in the USA each year. Lightning can strike from 10 miles away. In order to ensure the safety and well-being of the student-athletes, coaches and spectators at practices and athletic events, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive action plan for lightning and

other weather related emergencies. The following plan has been adapted from the NATA Position Statement: Lightning Safety for Athletics and Recreation. This plan includes the chain of command, designated weather watcher, means of monitoring local weather, specific safe locations for each site, criteria for suspension and resumption of activity and use of recommended lightning-safety strategies.

Each school must have an approved emergency action plan for inclement weather on file in the athletic director's office.

Chain of Command:

1. If present, the **Principal, Assistant Principal** or the **Athletic Director** or **his/her assistant** is the ultimate authority and has the duty of suspension of the practice or game if the weather conditions become unsafe.
2. If none of the above is present, the **certified athletic trainer** has the authority and duty of suspension of the practice or game if the weather conditions become unsafe.
3. If none of the above is present, the **head coach** of the team (or his/her designee) has the authority and duty of suspension of the practice or game if the weather conditions become unsafe.
4. If the game is already underway and the officials of the game are responsible for suspension of the game, it is the responsibility of the school officials listed above to inform the officials of the weather conditions and request suspension of the game. If the **school officials** feel that the weather conditions are unsafe, the field should be evacuated to a safe location immediately.

Designated Weather Watcher:

1. The designated weather watcher is the certified athletic trainer if present at the practice or games.
2. If the certified athletic trainer is not available, the athletic director or his/her assistant shall be the designated weather watcher.
3. If none of the above is present, the head coach or his/her designated assistant coach shall be the weather watcher. It is the ultimate responsibility of the head coach to be aware of unsafe weather conditions.

Means of Monitoring the Weather:

1. Before practices and games, coaches and athletic directors should monitor the weather by weather reports and forecasts on television and on the internet.
2. WeatherBug Alerting system is the primary source of weather monitoring within the 10 mile radius of the school. The horn alerting system will signal when it is not safe to be outside due to the possibility of lightning as well as when it is safe to return outside.

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3. In the event that practices or games occur outside the WeatherBug perimeter, the weather should be monitored by use of the SkyScan and/or the ThunderBolt lightning meter if there is the possibility of lightning or storms in the area.

- a. A SkyScan reading of 3-8 or a ThunderBolt reading of 10 miles or less indicates immediate suspension of practice or games and everyone should be evacuated

accordingly.

4. The flash to bang method can also be used to monitor lightning if outside the WeatherBug perimeter. By counting the seconds between the lightning "flash" and the "bang" of thunder, you can tell how far away the lightning was. Each five seconds equals one mile.

a. If you count 15 seconds following the "flash" of lightning until you hear the "bang" of thunder, then lightning is 3 miles away. This is an indication that you are in high danger zone.

b. The "flash to bang" method of predicting the danger of a storm is used to determine the lightning strike zone. A count of 60 seconds or less indicates that you are well within the 10 mile strike zone and the event should be suspended.

5. The athletic director, certified athletic trainer, coaches, spectators and student-athletes should be diligent in watching for signs for inclement weather especially if there is a forecast for such weather. If anyone sees signs of possible inclement weather, such sightings must be reported to the chain of command for decisions about suspension of outdoor activities.

6. All individuals (coaches, student-athletes, or spectators) should have the right to leave an athletic site or activity, without fear of repercussion or penalty, in order to seek a safe structure or location if they feel they are in danger from impending lightning activity.

Specific Safe Sites for Each Location:

1. The primary choice for a safe location from the lightning hazard is in any substantial structure that is frequently inhabited. These building should have electrical wiring, telephone wiring and plumbing pathways because these fixtures aid in grounding the building. Breezeways, overhangs of concession stand, dugouts and covered entrances are not safe structures. It is important that everyone is away from doorways and windows and not in contact with plumbing or wiring during thunderstorms.

2. The secondary choice for a safe location from the lightning hazard is an enclosed vehicle. Cars or buses with metal roofs and windows closed afford protection from thunderstorms. Golf carts and convertibles do not provide protection from lightning. Individuals must not be in contact with the metal framework of the vehicle.

3. During home events and practices at the high schools of Lee County School District, the following areas should be considered primary evacuation sites:

a. **The football/soccer/track game fields-** student-athletes and coaches should evacuate to the locker rooms, gym, and/or hallways in main building. This location would also be the evacuation site for the visiting team.

b. **The softball and baseball fields-** student-athletes and coaches should evacuate to the locker rooms, gym, and/or hallways in main building. This location would also be the evacuation site for the visiting team.

c. **The practice field-** student-athletes and coaches should evacuate to the locker rooms, gym, and/or hallways in main building. This location would also be the evacuation site for the visiting team.

d. **The tennis team-** student-athletes and coaches should evacuate to the locker rooms, gym, and/or hallways in main building. This location would also be the evacuation site for the visiting team.

e. **The golf team-** student-athletes should evacuate to the clubhouse, to the lightning shelters on the course or to the school bus or cars.

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f. **The cross country team-** student-athletes and coaches should evacuate to the closest safety structure listed above and report to the coach that is in charge of that site.

g. **Band and Drill team**-band members and drill team members should evacuate to the band room.

h. Coaches should have appropriate access to these safety sites.

i. Spectators should be directed to their vehicles or should be evacuated to the gymnasium under the supervision of the administrator in charge of the event.

4. During away events, student-athletes and coaches should evacuate to the closest safe structure as directed by the host team. If no safe structure is available, the student-athletes and coaches shall evacuate to the team bus.

Criteria for Suspension and Resumption of Activity:

1. Teams should seek a safe structure or location at the first sign of lightning or thunder activity or as indicated by the WeatherBug alerting system. Postponement or suspension of an activity or contest (regardless of whether lightning is seen or thunder is heard) should occur if signs of imminent thunderstorm activity are observed or when the WeatherBug horn alerting system signals. These signs include darkening clouds, high winds, and thunder or lightening activity.

2. Once activities are suspended, the activity can not resume until 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or lightning flash as indicated by the WeatherBug horn alerting system signals.

3. A message over the public address system to the spectators about evacuation to safer locations such as cars and/or gymnasium should be made. Also, lightning-safety tips should be included in game programs alerting the spectators about what to do and where to go for a safer location during thunderstorm activity.

Use of the Recommended Lightning Safety Strategies:

Coaches and certified athletic trainers should educate the student-athletes and spectators of the lightning safety policy and strategies. The dangers of lightning should be explained and the plan of action should be understood by all coaches and student-athletes. Each student-athlete must know the nearest evacuation point and the importance of checking in with the appropriate coach. Additional safety measures that coaches and student-athletes must understand are:

1. Avoid being in contact with or near the highest point of an open field or on the open water. Do not take shelter under or near trees, flag poles or light poles. Do take shelter in a structure that has electricity, plumbing and/or phone lines because this structure will be a grounded structure.

2. Avoid taking showers or using plumbing facilities and land-line telephones during a thunderstorm. Cordless or cell phones are safer to use when emergency help is needed.

3. Individuals who feel their hair stand on end or skin tingle or hear crackling noises should assume the lightning-safety position (i.e., crouched on the ground, weight on the balls of the feet, feet together, head lowered and ears covered). **Do not lie flat on the ground.**

4. If someone is struck by lightning, follow normal first aid procedures. However, survey the conditions because an ongoing thunderstorm can pose a threat to the emergency personnel. If possible, evacuate the injured person to a safe location as soon as possible.

5. All personnel should be CPR and first aid trained.

6. All individuals should have the right to leave an athletic site or activity, without fear of repercussion or penalty, in order to seek a safe structure or location if they feel they are in danger from impending lightning activity.