



Gainesville ISD Athletics Lightning Policy

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

Prevention and education of our coaches are the keys to lightning safety. Education begins with information on lightning. The references associated with these guidelines are an appropriate resource. Prevention should begin long before any athletic event or practice is held. The following steps are recommended by the NCAA and NSSL to mitigate the lightning hazard.

Section 1: Chain of Command

Athletic Trainer / Game Administrator
Game Official / Head Coach / Athletic Department Administrator
School Administrator

The Licensed Athletic Trainer and the Game Administrator will co-command the implementation of the lightning policy. Both the Licensed Athletic Trainer and Game Administrator can activate safety plan by suspending the event.

The Game Administrator assumes the responsibility as a spokesperson to participating teams, school administrators, game officials, press box, and news media.

Section 2: Designate a Weather Watcher

The Athletic Training Staff will actively obtain weather reports the day of the game and during the event. This information will be shared within the department and the Licensed Athletic Trainer will disseminate the information within the chain of command.

Section 3: Monitor Local Weather Forecasts

All representatives in the "Chain of Command" are required to monitor local weather forecasts. The Athletic Trainers have access to the Perry Weather website and apps. All head coaches and administrators will be signed up to receive text alerts of lightning activity in the area.

Be aware of the National Weather Service issued thunderstorm "watch" and "warning" as well as any signs of a thunderstorm developing nearby.

- A "watch" means conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in the area.
- A "warning" means that severe weather has been reported in an area and for everyone to take the proper precautions.

Gainesville ISD uses Perry Weather to monitor weather conditions perryweather.com

Pocket Perry will be GISD's main lightning monitoring and warning tool.

When lightning is detected within 30 miles of the facilities a text will be sent notifying that lightning is in the "advisory area". If the storm is moving towards the GISD facilities another text will be sent when lightning occurs within 15 miles in the "caution area". If the storm continues to move closer another text will be sent when lightning occurs within 10 miles in the "warning area". At this time, all athletes and coaches will be removed from the playing field and sent to the "safe shelter." The public address announcer will make an announcement for spectators to seek safe shelter. Once no lightning has been detected within 10 miles for 30 minutes an "all clear" text will be sent and play will be allowed to resume. If lightning is detected within 10 miles during the 30 minute waiting period, the clock shall be restarted.

Section IV: Define Safe Shelter and List Safe Location

Any building that has plumbing and/ or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure. NOTE: avoid using showers during thunderstorms.

In the absence of a building as listed above, an enclosed vehicle with a metal roof would be considered a secondary safe shelter. NOTE: do not touch the sides of the vehicle.

In the event that a game is delayed due to lightning all spectators will be asked to go to the indoor facility or their vehicles, and the athletes will be taken to the locker rooms or the indoor facility.

Section V: Lightning Safety Rules

In the event that Pocket Perry is unavailable the Flash to Bang method may be used. Once lightning is spotted count the number of seconds until thunder is heard and divide by 5. This number is the approximate number of miles that the lightning is. Lightning is known to strike as far away as 10 miles from the storm; it does not have to be raining for lightning to strike.

Once lightning is detected within 10 miles of the venue, play will be suspended an announcement made, and all athletes, coaches and spectators will need to proceed to the safe shelter. A 30 minute timer will start at this time play will not continue until there have not been any lightning strikes within 10 miles for 30 consecutive minutes. Everytime lightning is detected within 10 miles the clock will restart.

Section VI: First Aide

In the event that someone is struck by lightning EMS need to be activated immediately. The game administrator or Athletic Trainer will make the call. A person that has been struck by lightning does not carry an electrical charge, therefore it is safe to touch the person and provide any CPR or first aide necessary. If possible move the person to a safe location away from any possible lightning strikes and puddles of water (in the event an AED is needed).