Inclement Weather

Lightning Policy: (6 Components of Policy):

1. Establishment of Chain of Command that identifies the individual who makes the call on the removal/re-entry of the athletes from the playing field
2. Designate weather watcher(s)
3. A means of monitoring local weather forecasts and warnings
4. List of specific safe locations
5. The use of specific criteria for suspension and resumption of activities
6. The use of recommended lightning safety strategies

Chain of Command:

The certified athletic trainer will determine the proper actions taken by the student athletes if they are on the field during inclement weather. The certified athletic trainer may recommend to the head coach that lightning storms are approaching and it may soon be time to evacuate the playing field. In the absence of a certified athletic trainer, the supervising head coach will make the final determination of when the appropriate time to stop/resume play according to the guidelines set forth in the lightning policy, although they may not override the Weatherbug Lightning Detector if it is in use.

Watchers

All coaches/staff members will be responsible for watching the weather during practice in order to determine if severe weather is imminent. The individual on top of the chain of command will then begin the process of determining the correct course of action to take. If the certified athletic trainer is on duty for the sporting event he/she will also monitor signs of lightning using either the Weatherbug or the flash to bang method.

Forecast

If severe weather is forecast for the day the coach may get an updated forecast from the internet Doppler radar or weather channel prior to beginning practice.
Safe Locations

The primary choices of safe structures are the Tuohy Gymnasium, Berger Fitness Center and/or the Valmont Building. The athletic trainer storage shed, golf cart or other non-grounded, non-enclosed structures are not safe areas and should not be used. Locker-room shower areas, swimming pools, telephones and electrical appliances should also be avoided during periods of severe weather.

Specific Criteria

If available the Weatherbug Lightning Detector will be used. The Weatherbug will be set to detect any cloud to ground lightning within a 10 mile radius of Newman School. If the Weatherbug determines that the lightning is less than 10 miles away, all outdoor activity must cease immediately and the athletes and coaches must relocate to the designated safe building structure. The lightning detector will sound with one steady 15 second horn when lightning is detected. If the Weatherbug is unavailable, the “FLASH TO BANG” method will be used to determine the distance to a lightning strike. This method is determined by counting the seconds between seeing the flash of lightning and hearing the clap of thunder. This number is then divided by five to determine the distance in miles that the lightning is occurring. A Flash to Bang number approaching 10 miles (50 seconds) or a rapidly decreasing flash to bang number indicates that it is time to cease the sport activity and seek shelter. All coaches should download a weather related app on their cell phones in order to closely monitor oncoming storms if they are off campus.

Athletes and Coaches are not allowed to return to the playing field until at least one of the following conditions is met:

- 30 minutes have elapsed since the last visible lightning strike or audible thunder clap. (if the Lightning detector is not in operation)
- The Weatherbug Lightning Detector has detected no activity in the 10 mile range. (the flashing light is off and three 5 second bursts from the horn have occurred)

General Recommendations for on- or off-campus events:

1. Stay away from all trees, lone objects, metal objects, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the tallest object in an area. Do not take shelter under a single tree.
2. If there is no safe shelter within a reasonable distance crouch in a thick grove of small trees surrounded by larger trees or in a dry ditch. Crouching with only your feet touching the ground and keeping your feet close together, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head to minimize your body’s surface area. Do not lie flat. Do not remain swimming in open or closed bodies of water. Locate safe shelter as quickly as possible.
3. Baseball dugouts, golf carts, bleachers are NOT SAFE AREAS.
4. The Gottesman Family Pool should be treated in the same manner as Lupin Field. No athletes should be in the water while lighting is in the immediate vicinity.

5. All metal sports equipment should immediately be dropped. This includes but is not limited to golf clubs, baseball/softball bats, tennis rackets, and metal cleats.

6. If you feel your hair stand on end or your skin tingle or hear cracking noises, immediately assume crouching position to minimize body surface area.

7. Do not use a land line telephone.

8. If someone is struck by lightning, immediately initiate the emergency action plan by calling 911.

9. Persons struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge; therefore CPR and first aid is safe to perform.

10. If the activity is off campus, be sure to identify safe areas prior to starting the athletic event.

All individuals should have the right to leave an athletic site or activity, without fear of repercussion or penalty, in order to seek safe structure or location if they feel they are in danger from impending lightning activity. (NATA Position Statement: Lightning Safety For Athletics and Recreation). No method of lighting detection can detect every strike nor is prevention from lightning guaranteed. However, if proper procedures are followed when dealing with inclement weather your chances of being struck by lightning can be greatly decreased.

References:

