

Clayton County Athletics Lightning Policy



Lovejoy Soccer Complex one day after lightning struck the field

Chain of Command / Responsibility for Removing Athletes

- The responsibility for removing athletes from the practice/game area in a timely manner lies with the head coach of the Clayton County athletic team(s). If the head coach is not present, an assistant coach will assume responsibility.
- During practice or game days, the Athletic Coordinator has ultimate responsibility for clearing the fields.

Criteria for Evacuation of the Practice/Game Area

The Clayton County Athletics policy will be as follows:

- The Athletic Coordinator will inform the teams of the park's policy with regard to lightning during pre-game warm-ups if weather conditions warrant.
- The Athletic Coordinator will monitor the lightning detector, will watch for lightning and listen for thunder, and will be responsible for determining when the fields are to be cleared.
- When the 8-20 mile alarm indicator is illuminated on the lightning detector, the Athletic Coordinator will retrieve the air horn and stand ready to clear the fields.
- **When the 3-8 mile alarm indicator is illuminated on the lightning detector the Athletic Coordinator will give two long blasts of the air horn and suspend all games/practices.** Everyone must evacuate to a safe structure or location. A safe structure would be defined as either inside the clubhouse or the garage. The exterior of the clubhouse and the pavilion area are not safe areas and these areas should be cleared.

- Everyone who is not inside one of these structures should be sent to their vehicle. A vehicle is considered safe if it is fully enclosed with a hard metal roof, rubber tires, and completely closed windows. Persons should not touch the sides of the vehicle! Convertible and “soft-top” vehicles and golf carts do not provide a high level of protection and cannot be considered safe from lightning.
- Persons should avoid using plumbing facilities and land-line telephones during a thunderstorm.
- If unable to reach safe shelter, persons should stay away from the tallest trees or objects (i.e. light poles, flag poles, etc.), metal objects (i.e. fences, bleachers, etc.), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Persons should avoid being the highest object in an open field.
- In situations where thunder and/or lightning may or may not be present, yet someone feels his/her hair stand on end and skin tingle, **LIGHTNING IS IMMINENT!** Therefore, all persons should assume the “lightning-safe” position as described above.
- A cellular and/or portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land-line phones, if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.
- All individuals should have the right to leave a site or activity, without fear of repercussion or penalty, in order to seek a safe structure or location if they feel that they are in danger from impending lightning activity.

Criteria for Safe Return to the Practice/Game Area

- Personnel should not return to the practice/game area until thirty (30) minutes have passed since the last lightning flash or the lightning detector indicates that lightning is greater than 20 miles away.
- Each time lightning is observed and/or thunder is heard, the “30-minute clock” is to be reset.
- **Personnel may return to the practice/game area when the Athletic Coordinator gives three short blasts of the air horn.**
- Blue skies in the local area and/or a lack of rainfall are not adequate reasons to breach the 30-minute return-to-play rule. Lightning can strike up to ten (10) miles away from the rain shaft of a storm.

Pre-hospital Care for Victims of a Lightning Strike

- Because lightning-strike victims do not remain connected to a power source, they do not carry an electric charge. Therefore, it is safe to touch the victim to move him/her to a safe location and to render medical treatment.
- During an ongoing thunderstorm, lightning activity in the local area still poses a deadly hazard for personnel responding to the victim. Personnel should consider his/her personal safety before venturing into a dangerous situation to render care.
- The first priority of personnel is to move the lightning strike victim to a safe location. 911 should be called immediately. Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes. Therefore, it is critical that CPR initiated as soon as safely possible by trained personnel.