

**University Recreation and Sport Operations
Blugold Athletics
Kinesiology**

**Lightning and Adverse Weather Policy
Updated: February 13, 2024**

Lightning poses a significant danger to those participating in any athletically related activity, event, or practice. The following policies are for the purpose of providing general direction to administrators, coaches, athletic training staff, recreation supervisors, and game officials in making these decisions, particularly as they relate to issues of authority. It should be noted that these guidelines are intended to complement rather than supplement either the NCAA Guidelines for Lightning Safety or the NATA position statement on lightning. Consequently, each individual institution is encouraged to develop more detailed policies and procedures specific to their institution's unique circumstances (e.g., field locations, personnel) (see below).

The following (WIAC) policies and procedures should include, but are not limited to:

- The identification of safe structures or locations.
- The establishment of plans for the safe and efficient evacuation of participants and spectators.
- The implementation of basic first-aid procedures to manage victims of lightning strikes or other severe weather injuries.
- The identification of how participants and spectators are to be informed of pending weather dangers and the possible evacuation order.

In relation to decisions regarding the starting, suspension or resumption of a contest due to lightning or inclement weather, the WIAC conference, and UW-Eau Claire states the following:

- As a minimum, lightning safety experts strongly recommend that by the time the weather monitor observes 30 seconds between seeing the lightning flash and hearing its associated thunder or by the time the leading edge of the storm is within six miles of the venue, all individuals should have left the athletics site and be within a safer structure or location. Individuals just entering the outdoor venue should be directed to a safer location.
 - From the flash of lightning, count the number of seconds till thunder, then divide by 5.
 - Example 30 sec / 5 = 6 miles
 - Example 50 sec / 5 = 10 miles
- The host institution's athletic trainer or recreation supervisor (or other person designated by the host administration who is not a game official or coach) is the designated spotter. A spotter's responsibilities include monitoring weather reports and utilizing commercial lightning devices (e.g., Weather Sentry, Weather Bug) to determine the proximity of the storm, as well as alerting the host administration and game officials of a potentially unsafe weather development.
 - Thunder may be hard to hear if there is an athletics event going on, particularly in stadiums with large crowds. A lightning monitoring app, such as Weather Bug **SHOULD** be used in conjunction with the flash to bang procedures.
 - **WeatherBug App**
 - If lightning is within 10 miles on WeatherBug App, stop games and clear fields. During a lightning delay, no one is allowed on the fields.
- Prior to the start of a contest, decisions regarding whether a contest will begin rest with the host administration. The host administration should confer with the participating coaches, game officials, an administrator representing the visiting team (if present), and the athletic training staff or recreation supervisor of the host institution.

- Game officials should be alerted during normal stoppage of play when the lightning is detected 25 miles from the venue. Game officials should be updated during normal stoppage of play when the lightning approaches 10 miles from the venue. Game officials should be alerted immediately when lightning is detected 8 miles away from the venue and play should be suspended.
- Once a contest has begun, the decision to suspend and subsequently resume a contest is the responsibility of the game official(s). Game officials are expected to confer with the host administration, an administrator representing the visiting team (if present), participating coaches, athletic training staff, or recreation supervisor of the host institution. If a game is suspended due to lightning, it is required to wait at least 30 minutes after the last lightning strike in the restricted distance.
- Decisions regarding the starting, suspension and resumption of a contest are to be made independent of considerations related to any team gaining a competitive advantage. Among the factors that should be considered are travel issues such as distance, expenses, and missed class time, severity of the weather conditions, immediate weather forecast, and playing-field conditions. In all cases, the safety and welfare of the participants and spectators are the single most important considerations.
- Weather-related decisions involving conference championship/postseason events will typically be made by the commissioner and/or the designated tournament committee.