

# NFHS Guidelines on Handling Contests

## During Lightning Disturbances

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a default policy to those responsible for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of contests based on the presence of lightning. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state high school association and the nearest office of the National

Weather Service.

### Proactive Planning

1. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during events.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby shelters.
3. **Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:**
  - a. **When thunder is heard, or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. SUSPEND PLAY AND TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY.**
  - b. **THIRTY-MINUTE RULE. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of lightning is witnessed to resuming play.**
  - c. **Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30-minute count, reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.**
4. Hold periodic reviews for appropriate personnel.

The UHSAA advocates the following on lightning safety for outdoor activities:

The vast majority of lightning casualties can be easily prevented through simple easy to follow safety guidelines. The keys to lightning safety are education and preparedness. Preparedness must begin long before the athletic event. Following are some safety considerations:

1. Plan ahead. Have a lightning safety plan. Know where people will go for safety and how much time it will take for them to get there. Have specific guidelines for suspending the event or activity so that everyone has time to reach safety. Follow the plan without exception.
2. Monitor the weather and postpone activities if necessary. Prior to a practice or event, check the latest forecast. Look for darkening skies, flashes of lightning or increasing wind, which may be signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm. Listen for thunder. If you can hear thunder...you are in danger of begin struck by lightning! If thunderstorms are forecast, consider postponing activities early to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.
3. Get everyone to a safe place. If you hear thunder, suspend your activity immediately and instruct everyone to get to a safe place. Substantial buildings provide the best protection. Stay away from isolated tall trees, towers or utility poles as lightning tends to strike the taller objects. Stay away from metal bleachers, backstops and fences as lightning can travel long distances through metal. Spread out to reduce the risk of multiple lightning casualties. Get everyone out of the water if a pool activity is underway. For a shelter to provide protection from lightning, it must contain a mechanism for conducting the electrical current from the point of contact to the ground.

On the outside, lightning can travel along the outer shell of the building or may follow metal gutters and down spouts to the ground. Inside a structure, lightning can follow conductors such as the electrical wiring, plumbing, and telephone lines to the ground.

Once inside, stay off corded phones and away from any wiring or plumbing. Avoid sheds, small or open shelters, dugouts, bleachers or grandstands. If no sturdy building is nearby, a hard-top vehicle with windows closed will offer some protection as the steel frame of the vehicle provides some protection if you are not touching metal.

4. Adhere to the NFHS Thirty-Minute Rule. Activities should NOT be resumed until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder was heard.