

Sports Safety Guidelines: Lightning

Washington County Schools Athletic Training

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Decision Tree for Personal Lightning Safety

Richard Kithil, President & CEO, National Lightning Safety Institute

1. Advanced warning of the hazard. Some options:

- "If you can see it, flee it; If you can hear it, clear it."
- TV Weather Channel; NOAA Weather Radio
- Portable lightning detectors; off-site meteorological services

2. Make decision to suspend activities and notify people.

- The 30/30 Rule says to shut down when lightning is six miles away. Use a "flash to bang" (lightning to thunder) count of five seconds equals one mile (10 = 2 miles; 20 = 4 miles; 30 = 6 miles).
- Notify people via radio, siren or other means.

3. Move to a safe location.

- A large permanent building or vehicle is best.
- Unsafe places are near metal or water; under trees; on hills; near electrical/electronics equipment.

4. Reassess the hazard.

- It's usually safe after no thunder and no lightning have been observed for **thirty** minutes. Be conservative here.

5. Inform people to resume activities.

**Most lightning deaths occur between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., so it is imperative that athletic personnel take the lead in assessing danger and making a decision to stop activity when it is warranted.