

Lightning Facts and Safety Procedure

Consider the following facts:

The average lightning stroke is 6 - 8 miles long.

The average thunderstorm is 6 -10 miles wide and travels at a rate of 25 miles per hour.

Once the leading edge of a thunderstorm approaches to within 10 miles, you are at immediate risk due to the possibility of lightning strokes coming from the storm's overhanging anvil cloud (for example, the lightning that injured 13 people during a concert at RFK stadium occurred while it was sunny and dry).

On the average, thunder can only be heard over a distance of 3 - 4 miles, depending on humidity, terrain, and other factors.

This means that by the time you hear the thunder, you are already in the risk area for lightning strikes.

"Flash-Bang" Method

One way of determining how close a recent lightning strike is to you is called the "flash-bang" method. With the "flash bang" method, a person counts the number of seconds between the sight of a lightning strike and the sound of thunder that follows it.

Halt-play and evacuation should be called for when the count between the lightning flash and the sound of its thunder is 15 seconds or less.

Rule of Thumb

The ultimate truth about lightning is that it is unpredictable and cannot be prevented. Therefore, a manager, coach, or umpire who feels threatened by an approaching storm should stop play and get the kids to safety or if the "flash-bang" proximity measure applies. When in doubt, the following rule of thumb should be applied:

***WHEN YOU HEAR IT - CLEAR IT
WHEN YOU SEE IT - FLEE IT***

Where to Go?

No place is absolutely safe from the lightning threat, but some places are safer than others.

Large enclosed shelters (substantially constructed buildings) are the safest (like our snack bars and press boxes).

For the majority of participants, the best area for them to seek shelter is in a fully enclosed metal vehicle with the windows rolled up. If you are stranded in an open area and cannot get to shelter in a car, put your feet together, crouch down, and put your hands over your ears (to try and prevent eardrum damage).

Where NOT to Go!!

Avoid high places and open fields, isolated trees, unprotected gazebos, rain or picnic shelters dugouts, flagpoles, light poles, bleachers (metal or wood), metal fences, and water.

First Aid to a Lightning Victim

Typically, the lightning victim exhibits similar symptoms as that of someone suffering from a heart attack.

In addition to calling 911, the rescuer should consider the following:

The first tenet of emergency care is "make no more casualties". If the victim is in a high-risk area (open field, isolated tree, etc.) the rescuer should determine if movement from that area is necessary - lightning can and does strike the same place twice. If the rescuer is at risk, and movement of the victim is a viable option, it should be done.

If the victim is not breathing, start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If it is decided to move the victim, give a few quick breaths prior to moving them.
Determine if the victim has a pulse. If no pulse is detected, start cardiac compressions as well.

Note: CPR should only be administered by a person knowledgeable and trained in the technique.