



POLICY WITH RESPECT TO SEVERE WEATHER/LIGHTNING DURING ATHLETIC EVENTS

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| POLICY NUMBER: | 2017-05-002 |
| TITLE OF THE POLICY: | Severe Weather/Lightning Policy |
| DATE OF ADOPTION: | Fall 2017 |
| SUPERCEDES: | none |
| DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION: | Spring 2018 |
| PROJECTED DATE OF REVISION: | Fall 2021 |
| PURPOSE OF THE POLICY: | To establish a severe weather/lightning policy to minimize the risk of injury from lightning strike or severe weather to student athletes, coaches, support staff and fans. |
| REVISION NUMBER: | |
| ACCOUNTABILITY: | VP Administrative Services, Athletics Director |
| RELATED POLICY/POLICIES: | |
| APPENDIX: | APPENDIX I – Venue Specific Safe Structures |

1. Preamble

The University of The Bahamas is an academic community that is committed to the pursuit of knowledge and truth through teaching, learning, research and service to the community. The University is keen on creating a dynamic out-of-classroom experience for its students that would impact the overall university experience as well as assist with the development of the whole person, through sports and wellness activities.

2. Scope

This policy presents guidelines for student athletes, coaches, support staff and fans in the event of severe weather/lightning. Lightning and severe weather are dangerous occurrences. Athletic teams that practice and compete outdoors are at risk when inclement weather arises. This policy will seek to minimize the risk of injury from lightning strike or severe weather.

3. Definitions

Flash-Bang Method- This is a method used to estimate how far away a lightning flash is.

- a. Begin timing (in seconds) as soon as a lightning flash is seen;
- b. Stop timing as soon as a thunder sound is heard after the lightning flash. This number is the “flash/bang” count.
- c. Divide the “flash/bang” count by five (5)
- d. The resulting number is the distance, in miles, from the practice/game area to the lightning flash

Safe Structure/Location- any structure, fully enclosed, substantial, and frequently inhabited building that has plumbing and/or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure

4. Chain of Command

- 4.1 The university athletic trainer will advise the head coach and/or assistant coach about the removal of athletes from the practice/game area.
- 4.2 The responsibility for removing athletes from the practice/game area lies with the head coach of the respective sport
- 4.3 If the head coach is not present, an assistant coach will assume the responsibility.

5. Criteria for Evacuation of Game/Practice Area

- 5.1 The university's athletic trainer will inform the visiting team's athletic trainer (if present) and/or coach and game officials of The University of the Bahamas' policy with regard to lightning during pre-game warm-ups
- 5.2 The university's athletic trainer will monitor the lightning using flash-bang method, watching for lightning and listening to thunder and, keeping track of the flash-bang count
- 5.3 When the flash-bang count reaches **40 seconds or less**, the university's athletic trainer will notify the following individuals:
 - a. The head coach and/or assistant coach
 - b. The visiting team's athletic trainer and/or coach (if present)
 - c. The game official (at a break in the action)

At this point, all competition/practice activities are to cease **immediately**, and ALL personnel are to evacuate to a safe structure or location.

- 5.4 In the absence of a sturdy, fully enclosed, substantial, and frequency inhabited location as defined as a safe structure, a secondary structure such as a fully enclosed vehicle with a hard metal roof, rubber tires, and completely closed windows can provide a measure of safety. Individuals would be advised not touch the sides of the vehicle!
- 5.5 Individuals should avoid taking showers and using plumbing facilities and land-line telephones during a thunderstorm.
- 5.6 If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, personnel should find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Everyone should assume the 'lightning safe' position, that is a crouched position on the ground with the feet together, weight on the balls of the feet, head lowered, and ears covered. Individuals should be advised **NOT TO LIE FLAT!** They should instead minimize the body's surface area and minimize contact with the ground.
- 5.7 If unable to reach safe shelter, individuals should stay away from the tallest trees or objects (i.e. light poles, flagpoles, etc.), metal objects (i.e. fences, bleachers, etc.), standing pools of water, and open fields. Individuals should avoid being the highest object in an open field.

- 5.8** In a situation where thunder and/or lightning may or may not be present, yet someone feels his/her hair stand on end and skin tingle, such is an indication that **LIGHTNING IS IMMINENT!** Therefore, all persons should assume the 'lightning-safe' position as described above.
- 5.9** A cellular and/or portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land-line phones, if the individual and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed
- 5.10** 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.

6. Criteria for Safe Return

- 6.1** Personnel should not return to the practice/game area until **thirty (30) minutes have passed since the last lightning flash or the last sound of thunder.**
- 6.2** Each time lightning is observed and/or thunder is heard, the "30-minute clock" should be reset.
- 6.3** Blue skies in the loca/immediatel area and/or 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.