

Policy on Severe Weather/Lightning During Athletic Events

Title:	Severe Weather/Lightning During Athletic Events
Policy number:	POL 041
Approval(s) required	Academic Senate <input type="checkbox"/> Board of Trustees <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Senate approval if required	(dd/mm/yyyy)
Date of Board approval if required	(06/12/2023)
Effective date of implementation	(06/12/2023)
Frequency of review required	3 years
Replacing or superseding information	Severe Weather/Lightning Policy
Revision number	1
Responsible Office	Department of Athletics
Accountable Officer	Director of Athletics
Related legislation, regulation, policy, or policies	List of relevant legislation, regulation and policies that are referenced by or impacted by this policy.
Appendix/Appendices	Appendix A – Venue Specific Safe Structures

1. **Authority**

Board of Trustees.

2. **Purpose**

To minimize the risk of injury from lightning strike or severe weather to student athletes, coaches, support staff and fans.

3. **Scope**

This policy applies to student athletes, coaches, support staff and fans.

4. **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.

5. **Policy Statement**

5.1. **Chain of Command**

5.1.1. The UB athletic trainer will advise the head coach and/or assistant coach about the removal of athletes from the practice/game area.

5.1.2.4.2 The responsibility for removing athletes from the practice/game area lies with the head coach of the respective sport or the individual responsible for the athletes in the absence of the head coach.

5.2. **Criteria for Evacuation of Game/Practice Area**

5.2.1. The UB athletic trainer will inform the visiting team’s athletic trainer (if present) and/or coach and game officials of UB’S policy regarding lightning during pre-game warm-ups.

5.2.2. The UB athletic trainer will monitor the lightning using flash-bang method.

5.2.3. When the flash-bang count reaches 40 seconds (8 miles) or less, the athletic trainer will notify the following individuals:

- The head coach and/or assistant coach
- The visiting team’s athletic trainer and/or coach (if present)
- 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.

5.2.4. In the absence of a sturdy, fully enclosed, substantial, and frequently 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!

- 5.2.5. Individuals should avoid taking showers and using plumbing facilities and land-line telephones during a thunderstorm.
- 5.2.6. 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.
- 5.2.7. 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.
- 5.2.8. 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.
- 5.2.9. 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
- 5.2.10. 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.

5.3. **Criteria for Safe Return**

- 5.3.1. 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.
- 5.3.2. Each time lightning is observed and/or thunder is heard, the "30-minute clock" should be reset.
- 5.3.3. Blue skies in the local/immediate 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.

6. **History**

Appendix A

Venue Specific Safe Structures

Sport	Game Venue	Relocation Venue
Track & Field	Old Thomas A. Robinson Stadium	Bathroom Facility
Soccer	Roscoe Davies Soccer Field	Locker Room Facility
Softball	Blue Hills Sporting Complex Softball Field	Nearest Vehicle

Sport	Practice Venue	Relocation Venue
Track & Field	Old Thomas A. Robinson Stadium OR UB Field	Bathroom Facility OR UB Wellness Center
Soccer	UB Field OR Old Thomas A. Robinson Stadium	UB Wellness Center OR Bathroom Facility
Softball	Blue Hills Sporting Complex Softball Field	Nearest Vehicle