

## Lightning Safety Guideline

Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect intercollegiate athletics. Within the United States, the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) estimates that 100 fatalities and 400 – 500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes every year. While the probability of being struck by lightning is extremely low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and the proper safety precautions are not followed.

The following steps are recommended by the NCAA, the NSSL and East Tennessee State University to mitigate the lightning hazard:

1. The game manager and athletic trainer will work together to monitor threatening weather and make decisions to remove a team or individuals from an athletic site or event.
2. The game manager and athletic trainer will obtain a weather report each day prior to practice or an event.
3. The game manager and athletic trainer will be aware of National Weather Service issued thunderstorm “watches” and “warnings.”
4. The game manager and athletic trainer will work together to establish the closest “safe structure or location” for teams or individuals and know how long it takes to get to that safe structure or location.
5. The game manager and athletic trainer will know how close the lightning is occurring using the flash to bang method. To use the flash to bang method, count the seconds from the time the lightning is sighted to when the clap of thunder is heard. Divide this number by five to obtain how far away (in miles) the lightning is occurring.
6. The following are tools that can be used to aid in decision-making regarding stoppage of play, evacuation and return to play:
  - a. Flash to bang count
  - b. Weather watchers
  - c. Real-time weather forecasts
  - d. Commercial weather warning devices
7. As a minimum, NSSL staff strongly recommend that by the time the monitor obtains a flash to bang count of 30 seconds (6 miles) all individuals should have left the athletics site and reached a safe structure or location
8. When considering resumption of an athletics activity, NSSL staff recommends that everyone should ideally wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field or activity.
9. Throughout any decision to stop play or decision to return to play, the game manager, athletic trainer, and officials will be in complete consensus.