To:        Chair, State Referee Committee  
          State Referee Administrators  
          State Directors of Referee Instruction  
          State Directors of Referee Assessment  
          National Referees, Assessors, and Instructors  
          cc: State Presidents  
          State Assoc. Exec. Dir.  
          State Assoc. Office Mgrs.  
          Daniel T. Flynn  
          Julie Ilacqua  

From: Alfred Kleinaitis  
      Manager of Referee Development and Education  

Re:   Dealing with Severe Weather  

Date: September 23, 2003 (REVISED OCTOBER 6, 2003)  

This position paper provides basic guidelines for dealing with lightning,  
windstorms, and other severe weather conditions. The peak season for severe weather  
occurs in the United States between May and August, typically in the late afternoon and  
early evening.  

1. Lightning  
   a. Recognizing the threat  
      (1) Apply the 30-30 rule  
          When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If this  
time is 30 seconds or less, seek proper shelter. If you can't see the  
lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good back-up rule. Wait 30  
minutes or more after hearing the last thunder before leaving shelter.  
      (2) Know and heed warning systems and community rules  
          Many communities or park systems have lightning detection and warning  
systems. Use this information and obey the rules established by the  
community or park system.  
      (3) Know and apply the rules or procedures established by the competition  
authority  
      (4) Minimize the risk of being struck  
          Referees must protect the safety of all participants by stopping game  
activities quickly, so that participants and spectators may retire to a safer  
place before the lightning threat becomes significant. Remember, if you can  
hear the thunder, you are within reach of lightning.  
   b. Seeking proper shelter  
      (1) No place outside is safe near thunderstorms  
      (2) The best shelter is a large, fully enclosed, substantially constructed building.  
          A vehicle with a solid metal roof and metal sides is a reasonable second  
choice.  
   c. If there is no proper shelter, avoid the most dangerous locations:  
      (1) Higher elevations  
      (2) Wide open areas, including fields  
      (3) Tall isolated objects, such as trees, poles, or light posts.
(4) Unprotected open buildings  
(5) Rain shelters  
(6) Bus stops  
(7) Metal fences and metal bleachers  

d. If you cannot avoid these locations, crouch down on the balls of your feet, with your head tucked into your chest and your hands over your ears.  
e. If someone is hit  

All deaths from lightning result from cardiac arrest and stopped breathing. CPR and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, respectively, are the recommended first aid. Referees should become involved in such assistance only if they have proper training.  
f. Remain calm. A calm official will often be able to prevent panic by young players.  

NO LIGHTNING SAFETY GUIDELINES WILL GIVE 100% GUARANTEED TOTAL SAFETY, BUT THESE STEPS WILL HELP YOU AVOID THE VAST MAJORITY OF LIGHTNING CASUALTIES.  

2. Other types of severe weather  

a. Severe storms or tornadoes  

Obey local rules and heed warnings (meaning that a severe storm or tornado has been sighted). Clear the field and seek proper shelter immediately – see above. Remember, according to standard weather warning terminology a "warning" represents a more immediately likely occurrence than a "watch."  
b. Hurricanes  

There is usually plenty of advance notice, so games will probably have been cancelled. Look for warning signs.  
c. Hail  

Stop the game, clear the field, and seek proper shelter – see above.  

NO SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY GUIDELINES WILL GIVE 100% GUARANTEED TOTAL SAFETY, BUT THESE STEPS WILL HELP YOU AVOID THE VAST MAJORITY OF CASUALTIES.  

If there is a possibility of severe weather, the referee and assistant referees should discuss these guidelines in their pregame meeting and ensure that all officials have a clear understanding of their respective duties. Referees in particular should clearly identify what assistance they expect in detecting and bringing to their immediate attention any dangerous weather conditions which may not be directly visible to them. If such conditions develop only after a match has begun, the referee should take the first stoppage opportunity to quickly review these matters with the assistant referees. A brief word to the coaches regarding steps the referee will take to ensure player safety in threatening weather conditions would be useful.