



Lightning Policy

Summary

The weather conditions experienced in McLean County, Illinois often include lightning. While lightning may be fascinating to watch, it is also extremely dangerous and underrated. During the past 30 years, based on documented cases, lightning has killed an average of 73 people per year in the United States.

Statistics show a large percentage of people killed by lightning are playing outdoor sports. An average lightning bolt carries 10,000 to 30,000 amps. An average plug in appliance draws 10 amps and the average house has anywhere from 60 to 200 amp service. As the electrician's adage says, "It's not the voltage that will kill you, it is the amperage".

While thunderstorms are most likely to develop on warm summer days, they can occur anytime warm and cold weather fronts collide. Thunderstorms will go through various stages of growth, development and dissipation. During the thunderstorm, each flash of 'cloud to ground' lightning is potentially lethal.

Lightning can travel several miles before it strikes something. If a person is in the path of a lightning discharge, it could prove as deadly as the current associated with the visible flash as it travels along the ground. Although some victims are directly struck by the main lightning stroke, many victims are hit as the current moves in, and along the ground. The ground emits charges that shoot up to meet the leading strikes and the high voltage gradients cause currents to flow in concentrated channels on the surface or within the soil. It is therefore evident that the potential exists for a large number of people to be struck by lightning as they leave themselves vulnerable due to inadequate protective action.

Contrary to popular belief, lightning does not always strike tall objects - it can strike anywhere and can strike repeatedly. Metal objects do not attract lightning, although they may channel it if the strike is already a few yards away.

There is clearly a need for all outdoor sporting clubs and associations to implement action plans, and adopt all precautionary methods to prevent any casualties to anyone participating in our sporting events.



Our Policy

- A designated person or group will be responsible for monitoring the weather conditions in the area and to provide awareness at the club level.
- Where possible, designated person or group should attempt to ensure that all players, officials and spectators are moved to safe areas.
- Monitoring should begin the day before a scheduled match to confirm whether or not thunderstorm warnings have been given by the weather forecasters. If so, increased awareness of possible lightning strikes should continue on the day of the match - until the games are over and the crowds have exited the area.
- Should thunderstorms be prevalent on match day, sound judgment, along with the prevailing conditions and consultation of local weather reports will be used in order to determine whether a game is to be suspended (to include delaying the game start) and when it is safe to resume play (as determined by referees or club officials). Illinois Fire Juniors, NFP will always act in the best interests of our student athletes.
- When lightning is sighted, the time until thunder is heard will be counted. If that time is 30 seconds or less (the 30-30 rule), the thunderstorm is close and should be deemed dangerous. **This is the time at which matches should be suspended for 30 minutes or more.**

Sources of Information

1. The Weather Channel: www.weather.com
2. National Athletic Trainers Association – Lightning Policy (White Paper)



"NATA Lightning
Policy.pdf"