

Smyrna Baseball League Lightning / Severe Weather Policy

Introduction

Lightning is one of the most dangerous weather hazards encountered for outdoor sporting activities. According to studies, an average of 400 people in the U.S. are struck by lightning each year, of which around 20% are killed. There is an average of over 500,000 lightning strikes in the state of Tennessee in any given year. The safety of our Smyrna Baseball family when weather approaches supersedes any desire to play a game or have a practice. This policy is designed to ensure all adults involved in the operation of Smyrna Baseball League know what to do and when in order to protect our players, parents, administrators, and other spectators during any SBL event (game or practice).

When to Take Action

During regular games at one of our parks, the Board Member on duty will be using tools to monitor weather and make appropriate decisions for the benefit of all SBL activities at that park. SBL will have a working lightning detection sensor at each park that shows the distance of detected lightning strikes from the park. Scientists indicate that when lightning is within 10 miles of your location you are in danger and should take action.

When a Board Member, using the detector and/or other publicly available information determines lightning is within 10 miles **ALL OUTSIDE ACTIVITY STOPS**. Umpires of games in progress will be notified and all persons in the park will be sent to a safe location to wait out the storm.

It is important to know that open shelters, dugouts, under trees, etc. are NOT SAFE LOCATIONS to wait out a storm. If there is enough time, players are to be returned to their parents and they are encouraged to wait out the storm in their vehicles. There is very limited space in the concession stand / restrooms but they can be utilized in an emergency to get away from a dangerous storm.

Since it is possible for a storm to form directly overhead, or otherwise not travel to us, it is not always possible to recognize when to take action based upon distance or measuring devices. If thunder is heard from a lightning strike that means that lightning is within 8 miles and action should be taken. (It is possible to "see" lightning that is further away than 10 miles but it is not possible to hear thunder beyond 10 miles away.)

During games, umpires also have the authority to stop games due to weather. If one field stops play from an umpires judgment of a dangerous storm then ALL fields at that park stops activity and goes to a safe place. Once again our priority is to be safe, not to play games.

During practices, since coaches do not have access to weather sensors, they are encouraged to take action based on hearing thunder and using free smartphone applications to track weather in the vicinity of their practice fields.

After Activity has been Halted

Once fields have been cleared for lightning, no one is allowed back out in the open (for either play, warm-ups, etc.) until 30 minutes have passed from the last lightning strike within 10 miles. Each time a strike is detected within the 10 mile area, the 30 minute clock will be restarted.

While umpires have the authority to clear fields for weather, only the Board Member on duty has the authority to cancel activities for the remainder of the day. SBL Board Members will use the following guidelines for determine when games in progress and future games for the day are to be cancelled / ended.

Weekdays – When a total lightning delay (time from first strike to time when all clear based on last lightning strike) equals more than 45 minutes then games for the remainder of the day are cancelled. The intent is to prevent games from running too long on a week night.

Weekends- On Saturday (or Sunday) we have more time to wait out a storm and no set rule will be in place. If a delay has (or will) last more than one hour, the Board Member on duty will consult with the Executive Board and a decision will be made based upon current situation and forecast for remainder of the day.

There will also be times when we know that lightning is accompanied by heavy rain that decision to cancel activities may be made much sooner.

If the decision is made to cancel games in progress, the local league rules covering interrupted games shall be applied. Every effort will be made to post such decisions as soon as possible on the league website and social media feeds. Coaches should monitor those for information pertaining to games on game day.

Coaches Responsibility

There shall be no debating the decision of whether or not to clear a field for safety. Coaches shall ensure that their players are paired back up with their parents and equipment is stored (or left in dugouts) as needed. (This includes teams that are potentially warming up for the next game.)

Parents Responsibility

Once fields have been cleared for safety, parents are ultimately responsible for the safety of their players and other family members. We encourage the adults to heed the warnings and safety precautions but ultimately they are responsible for their actions or inactions once we have notified everyone of the situation.

No coach or parent has the authority to determine their child or team is allowed back onto an SBL field (or practice / warm up area) once the board member on duty has cleared the field for safety.