



# BOARD POLICY FOR WEATHER CONDITIONS AND COMPETITION OR PRACTICE

## PART 1 – COMPETITION AND PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR LIGHTNING/THREATENING WEATHER

Prior to the start of a contest, the host school is responsible for determining whether or not the conditions present a threat to the safety of participants and spectators and will determine whether or not the contest will begin. Once the contest begins, the officials have the authority to postpone or suspend a contest due to unsafe weather conditions -- that decision may not be overruled. School officials also still have this authority. **On-site medical professionals should also be consulted and included in the decision-making process.** The Superintendent or his/her designee may overrule an official and suspend or postpone a contest once it has begun. In other words, once a contest has begun either the officials or school authorities may postpone or suspend a contest and cannot be overruled by the other party. When in doubt, err on the side of safety.

Thunder means there is immediate danger to athletes, officials, and spectators. The adage — "If you can hear it, clear it" — should be used to make decisions to postpone or cancel the activity. Lightning can strike 10 miles ahead of or behind the storm front and thunderhead clouds. While lightning on the horizon should warn of potential danger, under certain atmospheric conditions, especially at lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information that is available on many weather apps should help eliminate any uncertainty. When lightning-detection devices or mobile phone apps are available, this technology can be used in making a decision to suspend play if a lightning strike is noted to be within 10 miles of the event location. However, you should never depend on the reliability of these devices and hearing thunder or seeing lightning should always take precedence over information from a mobile app or lightning-detection device. Always err to the side of caution.

The MSHSL recommends that everyone should wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lighting or sound of thunder before returning to the field or activity.

Additional lightning-safety information:

1. The existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can, and does, strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain shaft. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike.
2. If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize contact with the ground because lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. **MINIMIZE YOUR BODY'S SURFACE AREA AND MINIMIZE CONTACT WITH THE GROUND! DO NOT LIE FLAT!** If unable to reach safe shelter, stay away from the tallest trees or objects (such as light poles or flag poles), metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the highest object in a field. Do not take shelter under a single, tall tree.
3. A person who feels his or her hair stand on end or skin tingle should immediately crouch, as described in item 3.
4. Avoid using the telephone except in emergency situations. People have been struck by lightning while using a land-line telephone. A cellular phone or a portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land-line phones if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location and if all other precautions are followed.
5. People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is safe for the responder. If possible, an injured person should be moved to a safer location before starting CPR. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help quickly. Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.