

UNIVERSITY OF WEST ALABAMA ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT
Lightning Safety Policy

Lightning is a dangerous phenomenon. Athletic teams that practice and compete outdoors are at risk when the weather is inclement. The Athletic Training staff has developed a lightning safety policy to minimize the risk of injury from a lightning strike to University of West Alabama athletes, coaches, support staff and fans. To monitor lightning the Athletic Training staff will utilize both the Flash-to-Bang Method and a SkyScan Lightning/Storm Detector. Our policy is in accordance with the *2003-2004 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook* regarding lightning safety.

GENERAL POLICY: A member of the Athletic Training Staff (certified or student staff) will monitor the weather and make the decision to notify the head coach or officials of dangerous situations and recommend the suspension of activity in the event of lightning. Exceptions will be made for any activity where an Athletic Training staff member is not in attendance, whereby the supervising coach will have the ability to suspend activity. The decision to suspend activity will be based on:

- ◆ Two subsequent readings on the SkyScan Lightning/Storm Detector in the 8-20 mile range regardless of the presence of visible lightning. (This device is portable and will be in the possession of the athletic training staff member or supervising coach.) and/or
- ◆ Utilization of 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.) *2003-2004 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook*. If it reveals lightning to be within 6 miles (a 30 second count between the flash of lightning and the bang of thunder) activity is to be suspended and everyone should seek shelter immediately.

PRIOR TO COMPETITION: A member of the Athletic Training staff and/or Athletic Director will greet the officials, explain that we have a means to monitor the lightning, and offer to notify the officials during the game if there is imminent danger from the lightning. The Athletic Director and game officials will then decide whether to discontinue play.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUSPENSION OF ACTIVITY: Once it is determined that there is danger of a lightning strike, the Athletic Training staff member will notify the head coach and/or official and subsequently immediately remove all athletes, coaches, and support staff from the playing field or practice area/facility.

EVACUATION OF THE PLAYING FIELD: Immediately following the announcement of suspension of activity all athletes, coaches, officials and support personnel are to evacuate to the nearest enclosed grounded structure.

OUTDOOR INSTRUCTIONS: If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees, a dry ditch without water, or seek a flat area (do not choose an open area where you will be the highest object). When there, crouch down wrapping your arms around your knees and lower your head to minimize contact with the ground and wait for the storm to pass. (*2003-2004 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook*)

REMEMBER: an automobile, golf cart, or open shelter are not ideal shelters, but will offer you some protection from a lightning strike. Do not touch any metal structures directly after a lightning strike.

At UWA

- Football Practice: Evacuate to the loading dock of Moon Hall (Physical Plant)
- Football Game: Evacuate to the locker room in Homer Field House
- Softball Game or Practice: Evacuate to the dugouts (both teams)
- Baseball Game or Practice: Evacuate to the dugouts (both teams)
- Cross Country Race or Practice: Nearest suitable structure. (see above for outdoor instructions)
- Rodeo: Evacuate to the barn or nearest suitable structure (see above for outdoor instructions)

Away Events: All UWA athletic teams participating outdoors will travel with the SkyScan Lightning/Storm Detector. A member of the Athletic Training staff will notify the host Athletic Training staff member and game officials before competition and explain that we have a means to monitor the lightning. We will offer to notify the officials during the game if there is imminent danger from the lightning. The UWA Athletic Training staff reserves the right to discontinue playing, in the event the game officials have not suspended play with the knowledge of inclement weather.

EVACUATION OF THE STANDS: During a competition, once the decision to suspend activity has been made, a representative of the athletic department will announce via the PA system:

1. Fans are advised to immediately seek shelter in the nearest enclosed, grounded shelter. (Football-Pruitt Hall, Armory, or vehicles, Softball-Student Union Building or vehicles, Baseball-vehicles, Rodeo-Barn or vehicles)
2. REMEMBER: an automobile, golf cart, or open-sided shelter may not protect you from a lightning strike so these are not adequate shelters.

RESUMPTION OF ACTIVITY: During practice, activity may resume under the following conditions. This decision will be based on:

- ◆ Thirty minutes AFTER the last lightning strike within an 8-20 mile range on the SkyScan Lightning Detector.
- ◆ Thirty minutes AFTER the last lightning strike within a 6-mile range using the Flash-To-Bang method. During a game situation the activity will resume once the Athletic Director, Athletic Training staff member and officials have conferred and the above criteria have been met.

OTHER LIGHTNING SAFETY TIPS: (2003-2004 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook)

1. There should be no contact with metal objects (bleachers, fences, golf clubs, bats)
2. Avoid single or tall trees, tall objects and standing in a group.
3. If there is no other shelter you may seek refuge in a hardtop vehicle. It is not the rubber tires that protect from lightning; it is the hard top metal roof that dissipates the lightning around the vehicle.
4. The existence of blue skies and/or absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can strike 10 miles from the rain shaft.
5. DO NOT LIE FLAT ON THE GROUND
6. Avoid using a land line telephone. Cell phones are a safe alternative if in a safe structure.
7. Avoid standing water and open fields
8. If in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick grove of small trees.
9. **If you feel your skin tingling immediately crouch and grab your legs and tuck your head as described above to minimize your body's surface area.**
10. Persons who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore, enact the EMS system and provide emergency care. CPR is what is most often required. If possible, move the victim to a safe location.
11. For additional information refer to the National Lightning Safety Institute at www.lightningsafety.com

DIRECTIONS FOR USING THE SKYSCAN LIGHTNING DETECTOR.

1. Prior to practice or competition, monitor weather forecast via the Internet or by calling local agencies for up to date information.
2. Check for any National Weather Service-issued thunderstorm "watches" and "warnings".
3. Monitor the weather for the following: sudden decrease in temperature, increase in air movement, sudden increase in humidity, visible dark clouds (though these do not have to be present for a lightning strike to occur)
4. Communicate with officials and/or head coach prior to activity about potential for bad weather and our monitoring system.
5. Locate the SkyScan Lightning/Storm Detector in an area removed from other electronic devices or machinery, which could cause a false triggering.
6. The SkyScan Lightning/Storm Detector is designed to work in a vertical position.
7. Turn the unit on, by depressing the on/off switch
8. Allow the unit to perform a self-check and make sure all lights are working correctly.
9. If you are using the AC Adapter, depress the "Battery Save" button twice to extend the life of the back up batteries.
10. Press the tone button to activate the warning tone. (This must be done every time the lightning detector is turned on.)
11. Set the range of detection by depressing the "Range Select" button until the 8-20 mile light is illuminated.
12. Each time the SkyScan detects a lightning stroke it emits an audible warning tone for **1 second** (it is not very loud so if there is ANY chance of bad weather you must have the SkyScan out where you can see and hear it).
13. Following the beep the lightning Range Indicator column will light up for approximately 3 seconds. The single indicator corresponding to the range of the detected stroke will blink for approximately 25 seconds.
14. Activity will be suspended when:
 - A. The SkyScan registers 2 consecutive lightning strokes within the 8-20 mile range
 - B. The Flash/Bang Method reveals lightning within a 6 mile range (30 second or less count between the flash of lightning and the bang of thunder)
15. Once you have determined that there is imminent danger of a lightning strike, communicate to the head coach and/or head official.
16. Evacuate the field and stands to an enclosed-grounded building. REMEMBER, a golf cart, automobile, or open shelter does not provide protection from a lightning strike. If there is no available shelter IE, cross-country, each individual

should see an area that is flat and in the open. Crouch down wrapping your arms around your knees and remain in that position until the danger of lightning has passed.

17. Activity may be resumed only IF the danger of a lightning strike is no longer present. This decision to resume activity is to be made by a member of the Athletic Training Staff, Athletic Director or Head Official.
18. The SkyScan can also detect severe weather conditions (high winds, tornadoes, etc) that may pose a threat to human life. The severe weather audible warning lasts for 15 seconds and the corresponding indicator on the unit lights up.

FLASH-to-BANG Lightning Detection Method

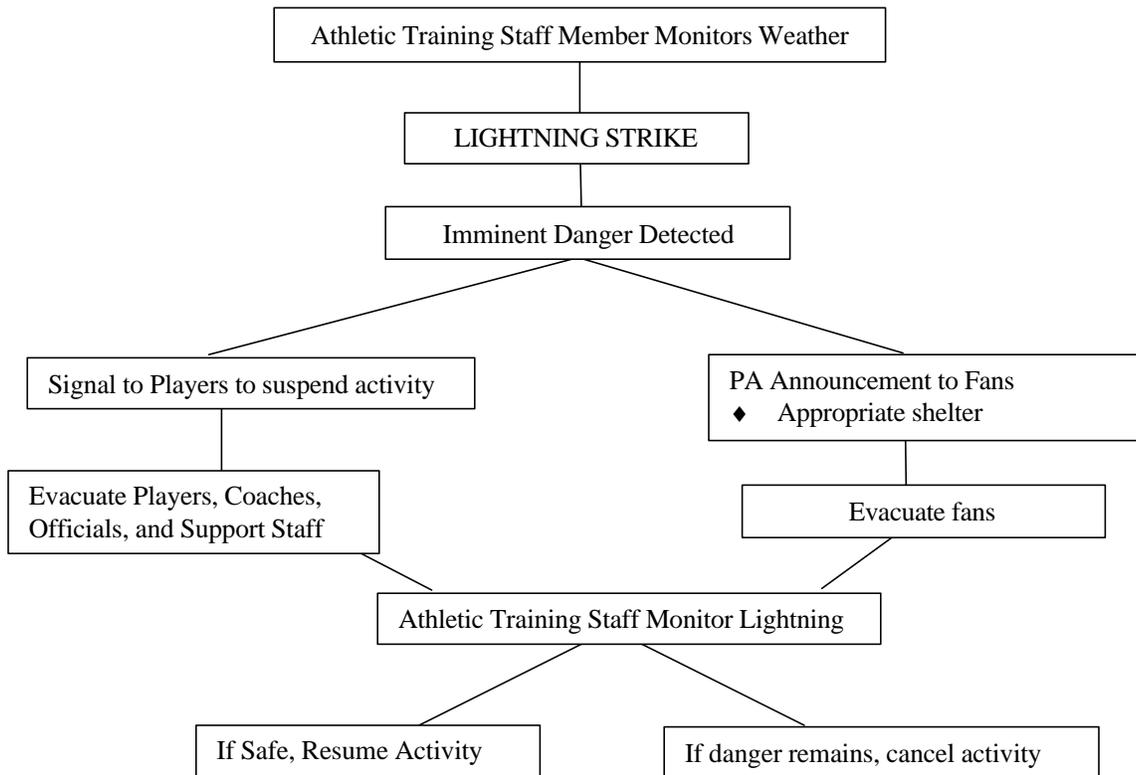
This method of lightning detection should be used in conjunction with the SkyScan.

1. Prior to practice or competition, monitor weather forecast to include calling local agencies for up to date information.
2. Watch for the flash of lightning.
3. Begin to count (one one thousand, two one thousand)
4. Stop counting when you hear the bang of thunder.
5. Take this number and divide by 5. This will give you an approximation of how far away the lightning is (5 seconds = 1 mile). EXAMPLE: You see a flash of lightning and you begin to count. You reach 45 before you hear the bang of thunder. $45 \div 5 = 9$. The lightning would be approximately 9 miles away. Using this method you would suspend activity with lightning at or within 6 miles.
6. Activity is resumed with the permission of a member of the Athletic Training Staff 30 minutes after the last lightning detected at or within 6 miles.

SCRIPT FOR CONVERSATION WITH OFFICIAL

Hello, my name is _____. I am a member of the University of West Alabama Athletic Training Staff. I would like to speak with you regarding our lightning safety procedures. On site we have a lightning detector which I will use to monitor lightning. In accordance to NCAA recommendations, lightning detected within 8-20 miles is considered to pose an imminent threat. Per UWA's lightning safety policy, when the lightning detector reveals 2 consecutive strikes within the 8-20 mile range OR the flash/bang method reveals lightning less than 6 miles we strongly recommend suspending activity until the danger of a lightning strike has passed. We have a communication system to inform all participants and any fans.

Chain of Action for Lightning Emergencies



Lightning Detection Procedures for Athletes during Non Supervised Activities

Examples: athletes using facilities in the off season, or outside of regular practice hours

Lightning is a dangerous phenomenon. Athletic teams that practice and compete outdoors are at risk when the weather is inclement. The safest measure to take is to proceed indoors whenever you see thunderclouds forming and remain until the storm passes. Just because you can not see lightning does not mean you are not at risk if you are outdoors. Other warning signs of impending bad weather include: sudden decrease in temperature, sudden change in humidity, increase in air movement, and visible dark storm clouds (though these are not always present during a lightning strike). The Athletic Training staff has a lightning detection policy in place for practices and games; however, we are aware that athletes often use UWA’s athletic facilities when there is no supervision by the coaches. In the event athletes are using the facilities without supervision, the Athletic Training staff would like to educate you and encourage you to use FLASH-to-BANG method to monitor the proximity of the lightning. THE FLASH-to-BANG Method is an approximation of the distance of the lightning NO METHOD OF LIGHTNING DETECTION CAN DETECT EVERY STRIKE.

The Flash-bang method of lightning detection:

1. Auditory: Flash-to-Bang Theory

To use this method, count the seconds from the time the lightning “flash” is sighted to when the clap of thunder “bang” is heard. Divide this number by five to obtain how far away (in miles) the lightning is occurring. For example, if fifteen seconds are counted between seeing the “flash” and hearing the “bang”, fifteen divided by five equals three. Therefore, the lightning flash is approximately three miles away.

- ◆ Each five seconds equal one mile
- ◆ If the time between seeing the “flash” and hearing the “bang” is between 15-30 seconds (3-6 miles), teams should take precautions and seek shelter.

*The National Severe Storms Laboratory recommends that by the time the spotter obtains a “flash-to-bang” count of fifteen seconds, all individuals should have left the athletic site and reached “safe shelter”.

PA ANNOUNCEMENT DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER

May I have your attention? We have been notified of approaching inclement weather. Activity will cease until we have determined it is safe and the risk of lightning is diminished. We advise you to seek shelter in the following areas:

AT UWA:

1. Football Game: Evacuate to Pruitt Hall Gymnasium, the armory, or your vehicle
2. Softball Game: Evacuate to the Student Union Building or your vehicle
3. Baseball Game: Evacuate to your vehicle
4. Cross Country Race: Suitable Structure, ditch without water, group of trees, your vehicle, etc.
5. Rodeo: Evacuate to the Rodeo Barn or your vehicle

Though protection from lightning is not guaranteed, you may seek shelter in an automobile.

Thank you for your cooperation.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT FOR ALL ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

As a member of the University of West Alabama Athletic Department, I attest that I have read, understand, and will adhere to the University of West Alabama Athletic Department Lightning Safety policy.

Signature of staff member

Date

Witness signature

Date