

IHSA Lightning Policy Update

Lightning Awareness and Monitoring

Lightning awareness should begin at the first flash of lightning, clap of thunder, or other signs of an approaching storm, such as increasing winds or darkening skies, regardless of the storm's apparent distance. These conditions should serve as an early warning to athletic personnel to closely monitor weather conditions and prepare for the possibility of suspending activities.

For all outdoor events, weather conditions should be continuously monitored from the start of pre-event activities through the conclusion of the event. Schools or host sites may utilize commercial weather warning and lightning monitoring devices or services with real time alert notifications. Those services are part of a 2-prong approach that includes 1). Sight and Sound and 2). commercial services that can be used to aid in the monitoring, notification, and decision-making process in regards to lightning / severe weather and any associated delays or modifications. These resources are intended to assist with weather monitoring, notification, and decision-making regarding lightning, severe weather, and any necessary delays, suspensions, or modifications to activities.

Lightning Detection and Suspension of Activities

When a commercial lightning detection system is in use, accessing the National Lightning Detection Network (NLDN), the alerts and recommendations provided by that system shall be used to determine when activities must be suspended and when activities may resume.

If a commercial lightning detection system is not available, all outdoor activities shall be suspended immediately when thunder is heard, or cloud-to-ground lightning is observed. Participants, coaches, officials, and spectators should proceed to designated safe shelter locations without delay.

Activities should be suspended for 30-minutes after the last strike of lightning is seen and after the last sound of thunder is heard. This 30-minute clock restarts for each lightning flash and each time thunder is heard. If a commercial lightning system is being used, then a 30-minute delay should be used until all lightning is outside of a 10-mile radius from the event location.

Rationale

Lightning remains one of the leading causes of weather-related injury and death in the United States. While lightning-related incidents are most common between May and September and typically occur between 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., dangerous lightning conditions can develop at any time of the year. As a result, all outdoor activities should maintain a high level of weather awareness regardless of season.

Vaisala National Lightning Detection Network (NLDN)—a professional, network-based system that identifies and locates actual lightning strikes and can automate your lightning radius, countdown, alerts, and all-clear

Q: What services provide real time notifications and are approved?

A: Apps that access the NLDN such as: Perry Weather, Thor Guard, Sferic Maps

Q: What services do not provide real time notifications and are not approved?

A: Weather Bug, Weather Channel, Accu Weather

Q: Is one method better than another, which one should be relied on most?

A: The idea in this policy is to use both methods in a 2 prong / check and balance type system. This allows for the greatest level of awareness and maximizing player safety.

Resources

<https://perryweather.com/resources/why-nasa-relies-on-the-national-lightning-detection-network/>

<https://perryweather.com/resources/best-lightning-detection-networks-ranked/#h-top-4-lightning-detection-networks-ranked>