



FOX CHAPEL AREA YOUTH SOCCER LIGHTNING SAFETY POLICY

FCAYS is first and foremost committed to the safety of all players, coaches, fans, volunteers and referees. As such, the Club composed the following Lightning Safety Policy to allow for the understanding of the dangers of lightning and how to minimize the risk of lightning related injuries. This policy is based on the most recent National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement as well as the most recent Lightning Safety Statement of US Youth Soccer.

Education/Lightning Facts

According to the National Weather Service, there are more than 20 to 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes in the United States per year. Some of these flashes strike directly beneath the storm where it is raining, but many of the flashes reach out away from the storm where people perceive the lightning threat to be low or nonexistent. Lightning is a significant health hazard estimated to result in over 100 fatalities and 400-500 serious injuries per year in the United States. Lightning kills more people each year than tornadoes. Those that survive a lightning strike can suffer devastating neurological injuries that persist for the rest of their lives.

- **All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous.**
- **Lightning often strikes as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall.** Many deaths occur ahead of the storm because people try and wait until the last minute before seeking shelter.
- Under normal conditions, **thunder can be heard from approximately 10 miles away.**
- Since lightning can also strike as far as 10 miles away from a storm, you are in danger from lightning if you can hear thunder. **If you can hear thunder, lightning is close enough that it could strike your location at any moment.**
- **There is no place outside that is safe in a thunderstorm.**

- **A safe place is a substantial, fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing.** Once inside of these buildings, stay away from windows and doors and do not touch electrical wires, plumbing or anything connected to these, including corded phones, plumbing fixtures or electrical appliances.
- **Note that small outdoor buildings - including dugouts, RAIN SHELTERS, sheds, under bleachers, etc. - ARE NOT SAFE.** These outdoor structures are often constructed with metal, are not properly grounded, and may actually increase the risk of lightning strike via a “side-flash”, which occurs when lightning strikes an object and the current jumps to a person near the object.
- **Other unsafe areas are** places with tall trees, light or flag poles, metal fences or bleachers, metal fence posts and stakes, goal posts, **open fields**, any point higher than the areas surrounding it, and puddles of water.
- **In the absence of a safe structure, a hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows fully closed provides good protection.** Contrary to popular belief, it is not the rubber tires on vehicles that provide safety from lightning. Rather, the metal roof and steel frame of the vehicle carries the electrical current from the lightning around the passengers instead of through them. When in the vehicle do not touch metal parts or framework.
- If you cannot get to a safe structure or a vehicle, stay away from trees. Lightning striking a tree will flow underground through the roots. **Stay at least twice as far away from a tree as it is tall.**
- If you cannot get to a safe structure or a vehicle, find the lowest area of ground. Assume a crouched position on the ground with feet together and all of the weight on the balls of the feet. It is important to minimize contact with the ground. Arms should be wrapped around knees with head down and ears covered. **DO NOT LAY FLAT ON THE GROUND.** Any person who feels their hair stand on end, skin tingle, or hears crackling noises is in an area of imminent lightning strike and should assume the crouched position described above.
- If someone is struck by lightning, call 911 immediately. People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is safe for the first responder. If possible, it is better to immediately move someone who has been struck by lightning to a safer place before starting CPR. Lightning strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need prompt emergency care. Prompt aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of lightning strike victims. Automated external defibrillators (AEDS) are a safe means of reviving people in cardiac arrest, including lightning strike victims.

FCAYS Lightning Procedures

I. Practice Procedures

The head coach and assistant coach of each team shall be responsible to be diligently aware of potential thunderstorms that may form during scheduled practice by consulting with appropriate and reliable weather forecasting services to determine ahead of time whether practice should be cancelled. **Coaches are instructed to use caution and cancel practice if the threat of thunderstorms is likely.**

During practice, the head coach or assistant coach shall have the authority and responsibility to remove individuals from the field due to threat of lightning.

During practice, the head coach and assistant coach shall be responsible to monitor the weather through an appropriate weather forecasting service as well as through observation of the current weather situation for signs of developing thunderstorms in the area such as high winds or darkening skies.

During practice, if lightning is sighted or thunder is heard then the practice should immediately stop and all individuals should be directed from the field to the closest safe shelter as described above. Practice should not be resumed. **IF LIGHTNING IS SIGHTED OR THUNDER IS HEARD, PRACTICE IS IMMEDIATELY CANCELLED FOR THE DAY/NIGHT.** A parent may also remove his/her child from the playing field at any time.

Coaches are instructed to plan ahead for possible inclement weather which can develop during practice so that an appropriate plan is in place for the team to get individuals to safe shelter as fast as possible. Particular attention should be paid such that players who get dropped off can either be picked up immediately or there is room in vehicles to safely account for all individuals.

When in doubt regarding possible thunderstorms, cancel practice ahead of time.

II. Game Day Procedures

A. Non-Middle Road Fields

Chain of Command – To prevent confusion, the coaches of the FCAYS team shall consult with the opposing coaches and referees to establish the chain of command with regard to directing individuals from the field in the event of potential threat from lightning or other weather conditions. Either the referees, FCAYS coaches or opposing coaches, or any one of them, shall at any time have the authority to direct individuals from the field if they feel there is a danger from weather conditions. The determinations made with regard to chain of command

shall also include communicating the decisions and directions to players and spectators. A parent may also remove his/her child from the playing field at any time.

Weather Watcher - the head coach of the FCAYS team shall consult with the opposing head coach and referees to establish a weather watcher who will monitor the weather through an appropriate weather forecasting service as well as through observation of the weather situation for signs of developing thunderstorms in the area such as high winds or darkening skies. In the event that a threat of lightning develops, the weather watcher shall immediately inform those in the chain of command (referees, FCAYS coaches and opposing team coaches) and a determination shall be made by any of them as to whether play should be suspended. The weather watcher should be someone other than a coach or referee. A parent may also remove his/her child from the playing field at any time.

Criteria for Suspension and Resumption of Play – In addition to the above, if thunder or lightning is detected, play shall be immediately suspended and all individuals should be directed to safe shelter as described above. **IF LIGHTNING IS SIGHTED OR THUNDER IS HEARD, PLAY IS IMMEDIATELY SUSPENDED.**

Play may not be resumed until no-less-than 30 minutes has elapsed since the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder. Every sighting of lightning or sound of thunder will restart the minimum, full-30 minute waiting period over again.

Coaches and referees shall consult with one another with regard to whether the game should be cancelled for the day and rescheduled in accordance with PA West rules.

In most circumstances, **SAFE SHELTER FOR INDIVIDUALS REMOVED FROM THE FIELD DUE TO WEATHER/LIGHTNING SHALL BE IN VEHICLES. Those in the chain of command shall direct individuals away from rain shelters or pavilions (which are unsafe) and to vehicles or other safe shelter as described above.** Individuals should remain in their vehicles or other available safe shelter as described above until someone in the chain of command communicates that play may be resumed or the game is cancelled. Individuals arriving in the parking lot should be directed to remain in their vehicles.

B. Middle Road Fields

Chain of Command – The designated Field Marshal, head of refereeing, Club President, or any or all of them shall have the authority to remove individuals from the field in the event of potential threat from lightning or other weather conditions. The determinations made with regard to chain of command shall also include communicating the decisions and directions to coaches, players and spectators.

Weather Watcher - the designated Field Marshal shall be the weather watcher who will monitor the weather through an appropriate weather forecasting service as well as through observation of the weather situation for signs of developing thunderstorms in the area such as high winds or darkening skies. In the event that a threat of lightning begins to develop, the weather watcher shall immediately inform others in the chain of command (head of refereeing, Club President, or any of them) and a determination shall be made by any of them as to whether play should be suspended. As both weather watcher and member of the chain of command, the designated Field Marshal may make the determination with regard to suspension and resumption of play without the need to consult others in the chain of command. A parent may also remove his/her child from the playing field at any time.

Criteria for Suspension and Resumption of Play – If thunder or lightning is detected, play shall be immediately suspended and all individuals should be directed to safe shelter as described above. IF LIGHTNING IS SIGHTED OR THUNDER IS HEARD, PLAY IS IMMEDIATELY SUSPENDED.

Play may not be resumed until no-less-than 30 minutes has elapsed since the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder. Every sighting of lightning or sound of thunder will restart the minimum, full-30 minute waiting period over again.

Those individuals in the chain of command shall communicate suspension and resumption of play as follows:

Suspension of Play - 1 long burst (15 seconds) from air-horn

Resumption of Play – 3 short bursts from air-horn

In most circumstances, SAFE SHELTER FOR INDIVIDUALS REMOVED FROM THE FIELD DUE TO WEATHER/LIGHTNING SHALL BE IN VEHICLES. **Those in the chain of command, along with FCAYS coaches and referees, shall direct individuals away from rain shelters or pavilions (which are unsafe) and to vehicles or other safe shelter as described above.** Individuals arriving in the parking lot should be directed to remain in their vehicles.

