

NATA Lightning Safety Guidelines

Due to the alarming rise in lightning casualties in recreational and sports settings in recent decades, the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) has released the following guidelines to follow when participating in outside athletic or recreational activities.

- 1) Establish a chain of command that identifies who is to make the call to remove individuals from the field.
- 2) Name a designated weather watcher. (A person who actively looks for the signs of threatening weather and notifies the chain of command if severe weather becomes dangerous.)
- 3) Have a means of monitoring local weather forecasts and warnings. (Know Weather definitions – **Watch** indicates conditions are favorable for severe weather; **Warning** means severe weather has been detected in the area, and all persons should take the necessary precautions.
- 4) Designate a safe shelter for each venue.
- 5) Use the Flash-to-Bang count to determine when to go to safety. By the time, the flash-to-bang count approaches thirty seconds all individuals should be already inside a safe structure.
 - a) Once activities have been suspended, wait at least thirty minutes following the last sound of thunder or lightning flash prior to resuming an activity or returning outdoors.
 - b) Avoid being the highest point in an open field, in contact with, or proximity to the highest point, as well as being on the open water. Do not take shelter under or near trees, flagpoles, or light poles.
 - c) Assume the lightning safe position (i.e. crouched on the ground, weight on the balls of the feet, feet together, head lowered, and ears covered) for individuals who feel their hair stand on end, skin tingle, or hear “crackling” noises. Do not take lie flat on the ground.
- 6) Observe the following basic first aid procedures in managing victims of a lightning strike:
 - o Survey the scene for safety.
 - o Activate local EMS.
 - o Lightning victims do not ‘carry a charge’ and are safe to touch.
 - o If necessary, move the victim with care to a safer location.
 - o Evaluate airway, breathing, and circulation, and begin **CPR** if necessary.
 - o Evaluate and treat for hypothermia, shock, fractures and/or burns.
- 7) All individuals have the right to leave an athletic site in order to seek a safe structure if the person feels in danger of impending lightning activity, without fear of repercussions or penalty from anyone.