

POSITION STATEMENT:

**RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING LIGHTNING SAFETY FOR ATHLETICS
AND RECREATION**

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The guidelines presented here govern all outdoor activities, as well as indoor swimming pool activities. The purpose of this position statement is to recommend lightening safety policy guidelines and strategies and to educate those involved with athletic or recreational activities about the hazards of lightening.

The following statement pertains to all Ave Maria University Athletic Programs, and is hereby set as our protocol upon administrative approval.

Postpone or suspend activity if a thunderstorm appears imminent before or during an activity or contest (regardless of whether lightening is seen or heard) until the hazard passes. Signs of imminent thunderstorm activity are darkening clouds, high winds, and thunder or lightening activity. Once activities have been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or lightening flash before resuming activity or returning outdoors. Blue sky in the local area or a lack of rainfall is not adequate reason to breach the 30-minute return to play rule. Each time lightening is observed or thunder is heard, the thirty-minute clock is to be reset. When in doubt it is vital to check with the athletic trainer or the athletic director.

The following statements are recommendations set forth by the athletic department, and should be viewed as prudent:

1. The primary choice for a safe location from the lightening hazard is any substantial, frequently inhabited building. The electrical and telephone wiring and plumbing pathways aid in grounding a building, which is why buildings are safer than remaining outdoors during an electrical storm.
2. The secondary choice for a safer location from the lightening hazard is a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and closed windows. It is not the rubber tires that make the vehicle safe but the metal enclosures that guide the lightening current around the passengers, rather than through them. Do not touch any part of the metal framework while inside the vehicle. Convertible vehicles and golf carts do not provide a high level of protection and cannot be considered safe from lightening.
3. Seeking a safe structure or location at the first sign of lightening or thunder activity is highly recommended. By the time the flash-to-bang count approaches 30 seconds (or is less than 30 seconds), all individuals should already be inside or should immediately seek a safe structure or location. To use the flash-to-bang method, the observer begins counting when a flash is sighted. Counting is stopped when the associated bang (thunder) is heard. Divide this count by 5 to determine the distance to the lightening flash (in miles). For example, a flash-to-bang count of 30 seconds equates to a distance of 6 miles. If a flash-to-bang count of 30 seconds is observed, the next flash could conceivably be at the observer's location.

4. A typical thunderstorm moves at a rate of approx. 25 miles per hour. Experts believe that 30 minutes allows the thunderstorm to be 10 to 12 miles from the area, minimizing the probability of a nearby, and therefore dangerous, lightning strike. Lightning can strike far from where it is raining, even when the clouds begin to clear and show evidence of blue sky. This situation is often referred to as a "bolt out of the blue."
5. Avoid being in contact with or in proximity to the highest point of an open field or on the open water. Do not take shelter under or near trees, flagpoles, or light poles.
6. Avoid taking showers and using plumbing facilities (including indoor and outdoor pools) and landline telephones. Cordless or cellular phones are safer to use when help is needed.
7. Individuals who feel their hair stand on end or skin tingle or hear crackling noises should assume the lightning safe position (ie. Crouched on the ground, weight on the balls of the feet, feet together, head lowered, and ears covered). Do not lie flat on the ground. The aforementioned sensations are warnings of a high electromagnetic field and an imminent lightning strike.
8. Small structures, such as rain or picnic shelters or athletic storage sheds, are generally not properly protected and should be avoided during thunderstorms.
9. A weather station broadcasting unit has been set up in the athletic training room and should be utilized to predict the probability of an impending storm. All pertinent parties should be in touch by two-way radios to keep all involved informed of dangerous weather situations. When in doubt refer to the athletic trainer or the athletic director.