



# ***Real Colorado Lightning Safety Guidelines***

The purpose of this guideline is to minimize the risk that lightning and other severe weather poses to players, staff, officials, and spectators at Real events by implementing a Lightning Safety Guideline.

The following has been developed based on best practice recommendations from the National Athletic Trainer's Association, the National Weather Service, and Children's Hospital Colorado.

## **General Guidelines for Severe Weather:**

- 1) Weather conditions shall be monitored by the head coach of each team before and during all Real events including trainings and games, both home and away. When possible, event schedules will be altered or postponed in advance to avoid predicted severe weather.
- 2) Every Real event shall have a designated weather watcher and a clear chain of command to monitor and respond to severe weather. This weather watcher will be designated by the head coach and/or medical staff. The authority to postpone an event due to severe weather will rest with the designated weather watcher alone, and this authority shall not be challenged.
- 3) Be aware of local conditions when traveling. Coaches and staff should check the weather reports before and during travel dates. During away matches and tournaments, do not assume that the host will have a weather watcher, and be vigilant in monitoring signs indicating severe weather is likely.
- 4) Anyone has the right to seek shelter at any time without penalty if feeling unsafe due to severe weather conditions.
- 5) Severe weather includes lightning, hail, tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods. Conditions change rapidly as storms develop and the National Weather Service may issue "watches" and "warnings" when large or dangerous storms are predicted.
  - a. A "watch" means conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in an area.
  - b. A "warning" means that severe weather has been observed in the area and everyone must take proper precautions. Warnings will include instructions on how to shelter safely depending on the type of storm expected.
- 6) Severe weather can occur at any time and the majority of storms will develop without a watch or warning from the National Weather Service. Do not rely on the National Weather Service or any other organization to make notifications when severe weather is approaching. There is no substitute for paying attention to changes in the environment which indicate severe weather is likely.

## **Lightning Safety Plan**

Lightning and severe weather can occur at any time of the year; however the months of April through October produce the highest number of lightning strikes along the Colorado Front Range, Midwest plains, and southern United States. It is estimated that 1 in 1,200 people will be affected by a close lightning strike, and the chances increase if proper safety protocols are not followed.

Lightning is a potential danger to the athletic population, due in part to the prevalence of thunderstorms in the afternoon to early evening during the late spring to early fall, when many athletic events occur. Lightning can strike the ground from up to 50 miles away from an active storm, in the absence of rain, and even when it

is snowing. Lightning strikes originating from the storm's periphery are the strongest and most dangerous and the risk of lightning striking increases as a storm moves closer.

- 1) Be aware of close lightning. The weather watcher will utilize WeatherBug® Spark™, Storm by Weather Underground or equivalent resource as well as visual monitoring to determine the proximity of lightning. The call to suspend activity due to close lightning will be based on how fast the storm is approaching and the amount of time it will take for event participants to take appropriate safe shelter. At a minimum, by the time the lightning storm has reached 6 miles away from the location of the outdoor activity, all individuals should have left the outdoor athletic site and reached a safe location.
- 2) **“When Thunder Roars Go Indoors.!”** If thunder is heard, lightning is assumed to be striking within 10 miles. If Spark™, Storm or equivalent lightning detection technology is unavailable, events shall be suspended and event participants must seek shelter immediately if thunder is heard or lightning is seen.
- 3) Several environmental factors will affect whether thunder is heard or not. Estimating the distance from close lightning using the flash-to-bang counting method is not reliable and shall not be used to assess the threat of close lightning.
- 4) In the event of close lightning: Suspend the event immediately. Notify all players, staff, and spectators that they must seek shelter inside a safe structure or in a car.
  - a. A safe structure is defined as a fully enclosed, substantial building that is grounded. A building is grounded only if it has plumbing and electricity. Locations such as a shed, open sided pavilion, dugout, or temporary shelter are not safe from lightning.
  - b. If a substantial building is not available, a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and the windows completely closed is a good alternative
- 5) Personnel should not return to the event until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last close lightning flash or last sound of thunder. Each time lightning is observed and/or thunder is heard, the “30 minute clock” is to be reset.

#### First Aid

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to be touched by others. Therefore, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is safe for the first responder. If possible, an injured person should be moved to a safer location before starting CPR. Lightning-strike victims with signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need immediate emergency help. Activate the local emergency management system and utilize an AED if available. Prompt, effective CPR has been highly successful for the survival of lightning strike victims.