

# VERMONT SOCCER ASSOCIATION LIGHTNING POLICY

Lightning is a fact of life in Vermont. It may be associated with rain, particularly in the spring and summer. However, it may also occur as part of a dry thunderstorm during the late summer and fall months. In no event can there ever be thunder without lightning. However, in the rare instance, lightning can occur without thunder. Lightning is a consistent and significant weather hazard that can impact Vermont Soccer Association activities. The National Severe Storms Laboratory estimates that 100 fatalities and 400-500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes each year.

In the event of lightning, the below guidelines will be followed during games, tournaments, practices, clinics and any other Vermont Soccer Association sanctioned events:

## **Suspension and resumption of activity**

- Outdoor activity must be suspended when lightning is a maximum of six miles away. This is because lightning can strike up to six miles from the base of thunderstorms.
- The “30/30 Rule” should be followed when evaluating lightning danger: if lightning is 30 seconds away, it is too close, and do not resume play for 30 minutes from the last seen flash or last heard thunder.

## **Suspension**

- For suspension follow the **30 second “flash-to-bang rules”**. The “flash-to-bang” Method is the easiest and most convenient means for determining distance to the Lightning flash, which is integral to assessing the need to postpone or suspend an activity.
  - To us the flash to bang method, the observer begins counting when a lightning flash is sighted.
  - Counting stops when the associated thunder is heard.
  - Divide this by 5 to determine the distance to the lightning flash (in miles).  
Example: A count of 30 seconds equates to 6 miles.
  - By the time the flash to bang approaches 30 seconds, all individuals should be inside or should be immediately seeking a safe structure location.
  - Be proactive** with the flash to bang rule. Indecisiveness creates a life-threatening situation.
- Lightning should be monitored with the first flash of lightning or clap of thunder, no matter how far away the storm is. It is critical to monitor how far away the lightning is occurring and how fast the storm is approaching, relative to the distance of a safe shelter.
- In the event that play is suspended, all individuals, including athletes, coaches, referees,

and spectators, should immediately go indoors or to their cars to wait for the storm to pass.

- If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch.
- A person who feels his or her hair stand on end or his or her skin tingle should immediately crouch down with only the balls of their feet touching the ground. Minimize contact with the ground because lightning current can enter a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. **Do not lie flat.**
- Avoid using landline telephones during a storm.

### **Resumption**

- For resumption follow the **30-minute rule**: Play should not be resumed until 30 minutes have passed since the last flash of lightning or clap of thunder.
- All games will resume at the point of stoppage. However, in the event that a game cannot resume after one hour, Vermont State Cup Rule G.8 applies: a game will be considered a completed game if it was suspended in the second half. If the game was suspended, any earlier, it must be replayed.

### **Chain of Command**

Utilize the chain of command listed below to determine who monitors threatening weather and who makes the decision to remove a team, or individuals (participants and spectators) from a Vermont Soccer Association site or event.

- If lightning occurs during a **game**, the game officials are responsible for monitoring weather conditions. The center referee shall decide whether play will start or continue, and when play resumes. The assistance referees shall help monitor the storm and will make sure that the center referee is made aware of its intensification or proximity. Any coach who becomes concerned about weather conditions should advise the nearest assistant referee. The team coaches are responsible for ensuring that their players are safe during the storm.
- If lightning occurs during a Vermont Soccer Association tournament, the VSA tournament staff has the right to suspend play should they deem necessary. The VSA staff will be responsible for communicating that play is suspended and for clearing the fields.