

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS SEVERE WEATHER POLICIES
(LIGHTNING & TORNADOES)

Updated: August 5, 2007

I. LIGHTNING POLICY



Lightning is an unpredictable and dangerous occurrence. All athletic teams holding practices and competitions outdoors are at risk during inclement weather. The UCA Athletic Training Staff has implemented a lightning safety policy to minimize the risk of injury to athletes, coaches, staff and fans. In accordance with the NCAA and Southland Conference, the Athletic Training Staff will monitor lightning using the “Hear-See” method and/or a lightning detector.

According to the Southland Conference Operating Code 1.02.05 each institution shall develop and adopt an official policy regarding the threat of, and appearance, of lightning. This policy shall be available to the other member institutions for inspection and posted at the competition site or communicated to the visiting team's head athletic trainer or head coach upon arrival. The policy shall also be communicated to the officials assigned to work the contest. An institution that removes its team from the field of play because a standard lightning device denotes presence of lightning will not be penalized.

General Policy: A member of the Athletic Training Staff (certified or student) will monitor inclement weather and make a decision to suspend activity in the event of lightning. In the absence of an Athletic Training Staff member, the head coach will have the ability to suspend activity (i.e. Golf, Cross-Country, and Tennis). Once the decision to suspend activity has been made, a UCA Athletics Administrator on site, coaching staff and officials will be notified. The decision to suspend activity will be based upon:

- * Two subsequent readings on the lightning detector in the 8-20 mile range regardless of the presence of visible lightning. This device will be in the possession of the Athletic Training Staff member.

And/Or

- * **Utilization of the “Hear-See” method. (Experts now suggest that if you “Hear” thunder begin preparation for evacuation; if you “See” lightning, consider suspending activities and heading for your designated safer locations.)**
 - **As a minimum, it is recommended that by the time the monitor observes 30 seconds between seeing the lightning flash and hearing is associated thunder, all individuals should have left the athletics site and reached a safer structure or location.¹**

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Prior to Competition: A member of the Athletic Training Staff will greet the officials, explain that we have a means to monitor lightning, and offer to notify them during the game if there is imminent danger from lightning.

Announcement of Suspension of Activity: Once it has been determined there is danger of a lightning strike, the Athletic Training Staff member will notify the head coach and/or official and the athletes will be summoned from the playing surface.

Evacuation of the Playing Field: Immediately following the announcement of activity suspension, all athletes, coaches, officials, and support personnel are to evacuate to an enclosed grounded structure. Shelter should be sought in a safe structure. If a suitable building is not available, a dry ditch may be used to crouch in. **DO NOT LIE FLAT! MINIMIZE YOUR BODY'S SURFACE BY ASSUMING A CROUCHED POSITION WITH ONLY THE BALLS OF YOUR FEET ON THE GROUND. WRAP YOUR ARMS AROUND YOUR KNEES, LOWER YOUR HEAD AND WAIT FOR THE STORM TO PASS.**

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS:

Football Game or Practice:

- Athletes and staff evacuate to Estes Stadium
- Fans evacuate to the Farris Center

Baseball Game or Practice:

- Athletes and staff evacuate to the baseball house
- Fans evacuate to the Farris Center

Softball Game or Practice:

- Athletes, staff and fans evacuate to the closest available shelter.
(A hard topped automobile may be used for shelter if other areas are inaccessible. If you stay in your vehicle, **DO NOT** open the door or allow anyone to touch the sides of the vehicle as it dissipates the lightning strike around it. An automobile is not as safe as a secure building but it provides more protection than being unsheltered.)

Soccer Game or Practice:

- Athletes and staff evacuate to soccer house(s).
- Fans evacuate to nearest suitable shelter or vehicles.

Tennis Match or Practice:

- Athletes, staff and fans evacuate to nearest grounded shelter.

Golf Match or Practice:

- Athletes, staff and fans evacuate to clubhouse, nearest secure shelter or a short group of trees. (**GOLFERS SHOULD DROP THEIR CLUBS AND REMOVE SHOES WITH METAL SPIKES.** Individuals should not stand in groups or near a single tree. There should be 15 feet between individuals. If possible seek shelter near a group of smaller trees.)

Cross-Country Meet or Practice:

- Athletes, staff and fans evacuate to nearest grounded shelter, dry ditch, or small group of trees.

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Additional Lightning Safety Tips:

1. There should be no contact with metal objects (bleachers, fences, golf clubs, bats, etc).
2. Single trees and standing in a group should be avoided.
3. If there is no other shelter, you may seek refuge in a hardtop vehicle. It is not the rubber tires that protect from lightning; it is the hardtop metal roof that dissipates the lightning around the vehicle. (NCAA, 2007)¹
4. The existence of blue skies and/or absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can strike 10 miles away from the rain shaft. (NCAA, 2007)¹
5. **DO NOT LIE FLAT ON THE GROUND.**
6. Avoid using a landline telephone.
7. Persons who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. You can provide care. Move the victim to a safe location to provide care.
8. If in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick grove of small trees.

Evacuation of the Stands and PA Announcement: During a competition, once the official signals to suspend activity, a member of the Sports Information Staff will announce via the PA system the following message and direct them to the above areas:

"May I have your attention, please? We have been notified of approaching inclement weather. Activity will cease until we have determined it is safe and the risk of lightning is diminished. We advise you to seek enclosed shelter."

Resumption of Activity: Activity may resume once a member of the Athletic Training Staff gives permission. This decision will be based on:

- * Two consecutive readings of lightning strikes 20-40 miles away on the Guardian Angel Lightning Detector and none occurring within the 8-20 mile range.

AND/OR

- * Thirty minutes **AFTER** the last lightning strike or last sound of thunder. (If lightning is seen w/o hearing thunder, lightning may be out of range and therefore less likely to be a significant threat).

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Script to Officials for Notification of Lightning Policy:

Hello, my name is _____. I am a member of the UCA Athletic Training Staff. I would like to speak with you regarding our lightning safety procedures. On site we have a lightning detector that I will use to monitor lightning. In accordance with NCAA recommendations, lightning detection within 8-20 miles is considered to pose an imminent threat. Per UCA's lightning policy, when the lightning detector reveals two consecutive strikes within the 8-20 mile range **OR** a positive finding using the "Hear-See" method, we strongly recommend suspending activity until the danger of a lightning strike has passed. We have a communication system to inform all participants and fans.

Directions for using the Guardian Angel®:

1. Prior to competition monitor weather forecasts to include calling local agencies for up to date information.
2. Monitor the weather for the following: sudden decrease in temperature, increase in air movement, and sudden increase in humidity, visible dark clouds.
3. Communicate with officials and/or head coach prior to activity about potential for bad weather and our monitoring system.
4. Place the Guardian Angel in an area removed from other electronic devices or machinery, which could cause a false triggering. Place the unit in a vertical position.
5. Turn the unit on.
6. Press the tone button to activate the warning tone.
7. Each time the Guardian Angel detects a lightning strike it emits an audible warning tone for one second. (It is not very loud so keep it within a range that you can see it and hear it)
8. Following the beep, the lightning range indicator column will light up for approximately three seconds. The signal indicator corresponding to the range of the detected strike will blink for approximately 25 seconds.
9. Activity will be suspended when the Guardian Angel registers two consecutive lightning strikes within the 8-20 mile range.

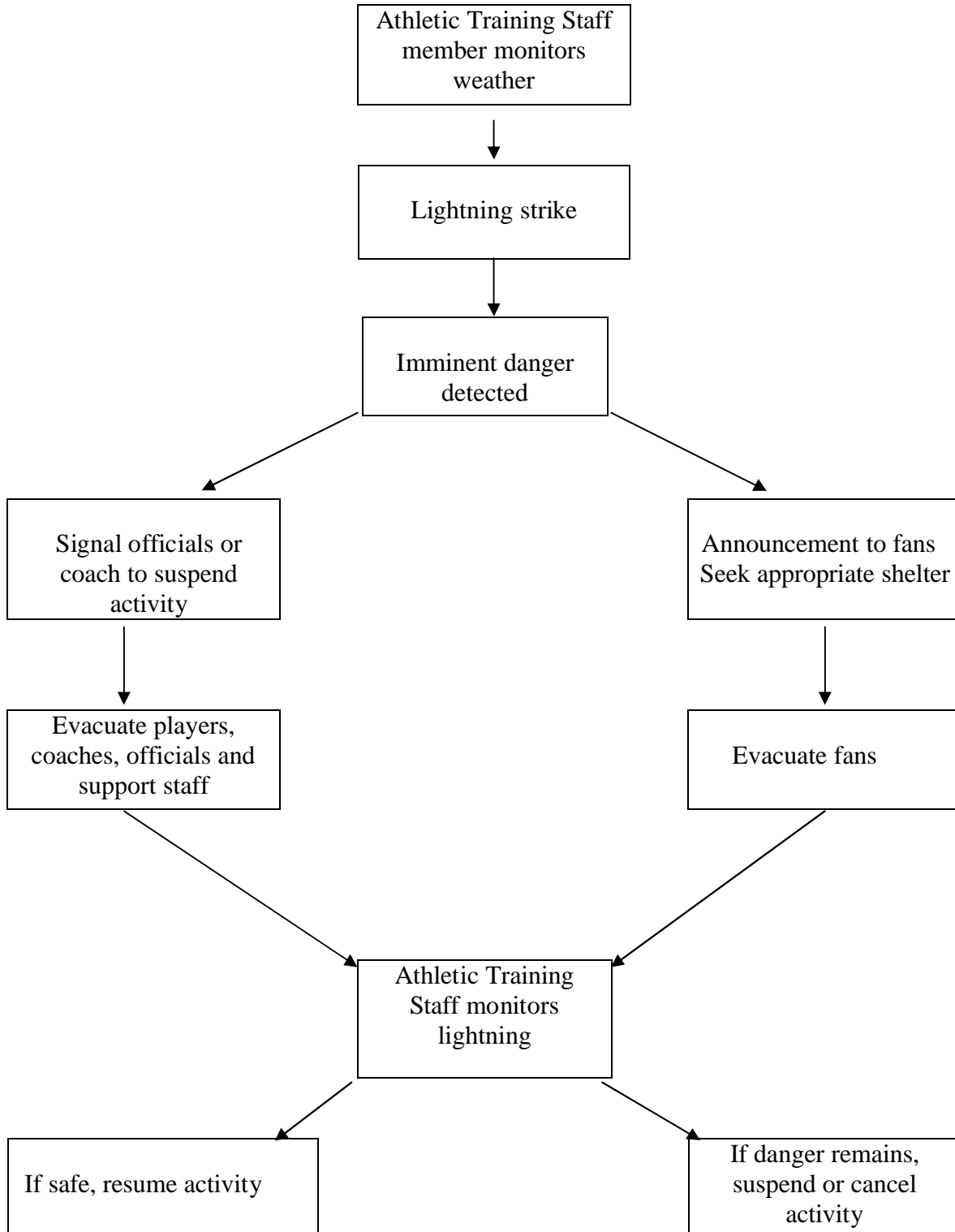
What if someone is struck by lightning?

Recommended Prehospital Care for Treating Lightning-Strike Victims:³

- a. Survey the scene (safe for u? victim findings – unconscious, fixed/dilated pupils, cold extremities, cardiopulmonary arrest)
- b. Activate EAP.
- c. Carefully move the victim to a safe area, if needed.
- d. Evaluate and treat for apnea/asystole.
- e. Evaluate and treat for hypothermia and shock.
- f. Evaluate and treat for fractures.
- g. Evaluate and treat for burns

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II. TORNADOES²

A tornado is a violent windstorm characterized by a twisting, funnel-shaped cone. It is originated from a thunderstorm/hurricane, and is produced as cool air overrides a layer of warm air, for the warm air to rise rapidly. Tornado season is normally March through August, although they can occur at any time of the year. They tend to occur most in the afternoons and evenings.



Tornadoes strike with incredible velocity, with speeds up to 300 miles per hour. Their destructive power is immense. Typically, a tornado will stay on the ground for no more than 20 minutes. However, one tornado can touch ground several times in different areas.

Tornado Watch

A tornado watch means that conditions are favorable for a tornado to occur. Be aware/alert of the current weather situation in the area and do the following:

- 1. Review the actions that should take place should a tornado watch develop, or if a tornado funnel is sighted.**
- 2. Ensure no physical restrictions exist that would prevent free movement to your nearest safe area (clear any blocked doors, aisles, etc.)**
- 3. Continue normal activities, but be alert to the weather outside, and monitor the radio/television or watch the sky for worsening weather conditions.**
- 4. DO NOT phone the UCA police or the campus operator for information. Keep the telephone lines clear for emergency messages.**

Tornado Warning

A tornado warning means that a tornado has been sighted. You should do the following:

- 1. Take cover!**
 - a. Proceed to the nearest safe area/shelter**
 - b. Because of possible electrical failures, use the stairs, not the elevator.**
 - c. Remain clear of windows or other glass.**
 - d. Avoid auditoriums and gymnasiums with large poorly supported roofs.**
- 2. In multi-story buildings, you should move to the basement or first floor. Inner hallways are usually safe areas. If possible, move to the ground level. If you are in a frame or sheet metal building and weather conditions permit, move to a brick or stone building for added protection.**

References:

1. NCAA Sports Medicine Guidelines, pp 12-14, 2007
2. University of Central Arkansas Police Department, "Emergency Procedures: Reference Guide – Severe Weather", 2007
3. Walsh, Bennette, et. al, "NATA Position Statement: Lightning Safety for Athletics and Recreation", Journal of Athletic Training, 2000.