



## Lightning Policy

### Purpose

This policy seeks to develop the guidelines for the management of outdoor SWVFA activities including training, matches and other events when the risk of lightning is present. Implementing the details of this policy may increase the safety and protection of participants and spectators attending our SWVFA activities, while minimizing the risk of injury or fatality during thunderstorms or instances of high lightning activity.

### Policy Statements

Lightning storms pose a serious risk of serious injury or death to our participants, members, and visitors to all outdoor sporting events. The general principle is that 10km's is the minimum safe distance from a storm, as lightning is capable of striking 10km's from the edge of a thunderstorm.

It should be noted that an individual does not need to be directly struck by lightning to cause serious injury or a fatality. An individual touching, or close to, any object struck by lightning may be considered within the lethal zone and may be affected by transferred energy or a side-flash.

All SWVFA Officials, players, coaches, members, and spectators must not let the desire to start or complete a training session, match or event override the need to protect the safety and well-being of all participants.

### 30/30 Rule

The 30/30 rule is a guideline for the suspension, abandonment, and/or the safe resumption of SWVFA activities. This rule is not an absolute, as storms are capable of rapid movement, so it is crucial that coaches and officials monitor all weather conditions to be alert of the risk of any lightning.

The 30/30 rule is determined by counting the seconds between witnessing the lightning flash to when the thunder is heard. This principle dictates that a 30 second interval signals a storm is roughly 10km away.

### Step 1 – Ceasing Activities

Match officials, coaches or SWVFA officials should monitor any approaching storms, and as the lightning to thunder count nears 30 seconds or less, all participants, coaches, officials, and spectators should immediately



cease any training, game or SWVFA activity, and all those at risk should seek immediate evacuation to safe shelter.

### **Step 2 – Resuming Activities**

For training, matches or SWVFA activities to resume, it is recommended that the storm is further than 20km away before it is considered safe. Storms typically move at 40km per hour, so waiting 30 minutes or more after the last lightning is seen or thunder is heard should provide adequate safety.

A crucial factor to emphasize is that blue sky and lack of rain is not adequate justification to ignore the 30/30 rule, as many victims can be struck before the storm arrives. It is vital all participants seek shelter and safety in the presence of lightning and thunder.

### **Safe Structures for Shelter**

It must be emphasized that no shelter or structure is 100% safe from lightning, but some provide better protection than others. The SWVFA will identify potential safe locations and ensure that officials and coaches are aware of where to go in a lightning storm.

Safer areas for shelter include:

- 1) Substantial enclosed buildings
- 2) Enclosed vehicles such as cars, buses, etc with windows closed, avoiding contact with metal
- 3) Sheltering in clumps of low bushes, low to the ground
- 4) Trees of similar height

Unsafe areas for shelter include:

- 1) High and/or ground
- 2) Single, isolated, or tall trees
- 3) Bodies of water or water affected areas
- 4) Near outdoor metal structures (Eg. seating, fences, gates, poles)
- 5) Insubstantial structures (Eg. Shade shelters and picnic sheds)

Should any participant be caught outside during a storm and hear crackling/buzzing noise in the air or feel their hair stand on end, they may be within the field of charge of a lightning strike and in significant danger.



If immediate shelter is unavailable, remove metal objects (Eg. Belts, keys, earrings, etc), crouch down with feet together, place head down and hands covering the ears. It may be safer adopting this position if stuck outdoors than to be in one of the unsafe shelters or situations listed above.

### Procedures

When encountering a lightning storm, the SWVFA will respond with the following:

- 1) In conjunction with any relevant Coach or Match Official, our SWVFA may delay, postpone, or abandon any training session, fixture, or SWVFA activity due to extreme weather conditions that may endanger participants including but not limited to lightning storms.
- 2) Any storm which produces thunder signals lightning is always present, even though it obscured by clouds.
- 3) The relevant Coach or Match Official should suspend any training session, fixture, or SWVFA activity during lightning storms under the 30/30 Lightning Safety Guideline so participants can take suitable shelter.
- 4) If there is less than 30 seconds between the lightning and thunder, then the lightning is within 10 km of the listener.
- 5) When lightning this close is observed, the training session, match or other SWVFA activity should be suspended until 30 minutes after the last lightning event.
- 6) Playing surfaces and conditions should be reviewed by the Coach or Match Official to ensure improved and safe circumstances prior to re-commencing training, game play, or any other activities, with additional attention given to the level of residual water on the playing surface.

#### **30/30 LIGHTNING SAFETY GUIDELINE**

**1. Stop play if the time between seeing a lightning flash and hearing thunder is less than 30 seconds. Immediately safety under appropriate shelter.**

**2. Do not resume play until at least 30 minutes has passed since the last thunder was heard.**

### First Aid

Lightning strike victims are safe to handle, assist and treat, though First Aiders should ensure they themselves do not become a casualty by moving the victim to a safer location. Immediately call 000 for assistance in providing



medical care. Victims may suffer cardiac and respiratory arrest after lightning strike due to disruption of brain function, therefore CPR should be administered where required. It is vital that individuals who do not exhibit any immediate symptoms after the strike still receive medical attention, as there may be delayed onset of some symptoms or issues.

Please note that the SWVFA will defer to the relevant Rules of Competition in relation to Extreme Weather for all affected fixtures. Specifically, in that FV, the Regional Association, and/or the Match Official may delay, postpone, or abandon any fixture due to weather and pitch conditions such as (but not limited to) excessive heat/humidity, cold temperatures, lightning, hail, rain or air quality that may endanger participants health and/or safety.

### **Disclaimer**

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