

Severe Weather/Lightning Policy

The following plan will be in effect for all Murray Calloway County Parks & Recreation and Murray Youth Baseball & Softball youth events:

Depending on the event, the Park Staff and/or game official will monitor the weather. This will be done through the use of a lightning and storm detector (with Park Staff) or by the Flash-to-Bang Method. In the event of threatening or inclement weather, the Park Staff Member or game official will inform the participants and spectators of impending severe weather.

GENERAL POLICY: Park Staff and/or game official will monitor the weather and make the decision to notify the head coach or officials of dangerous situations and recommend the suspension of activity in the event of lightning. Exceptions will be made for any activity where a Park Staff member or Game Official is not in attendance, whereby the supervising coach will have the ability to suspend activity. The decision to suspend activity will be based on:

- Two subsequent readings on a Lightning/Storm Detector in the 8 -20 mile range regardless of the presence of visible lightning. (This device is portable and will be in the possession of the Park Staff, and/or
- Utilization of the Flash-to-Bang Method (Count the seconds from the time the lightning is sighted to when the clap of thunder is heard. Divide this number by five to obtain how far away, in miles, the lightning is occurring.) If it reveals lightning to be within 6 miles (a 30 second count between the flash of lightning and the bang of thunder) activity is to be suspended and everyone should seek shelter immediately.

Prior To Competition

If inclement weather is possible prior to play, either Park Staff and/or Game Official will meet with coaches and make sure that each coach understands, and if necessary, explain that we have a means to monitor the lightning and what determines the stoppage of play during the game, if there is imminent danger from the lightning. The coaches need to understand that Park Staff and/or the Umpire Crew Chief will decide whether to suspend play.

During Competition

Suspension Of Play

Once it is determined that there is a danger of inclement weather, the Park Staff and/or Game Official will direct umpires and coaches to immediately remove all players, coaches, spectators and support staff from the playing field.

Signal to Suspend Play: This will be done by a warning signal (one long 15 second air horn blast) to announce suspended play. The Ranger or game official must communicate the closure to all fields, including those at Chestnut Park, the Quad Plex and T Ball fields.

Evacuation of Playing Field and Stands: Immediately following the suspension of play, all players, coaches, officials, support personnel and spectators are to evacuate the facility. Everyone must evacuate to a safe structure or location. Everyone who is **not** inside a building should be sent to their vehicle.

A vehicle is considered safe if it is fully enclosed with a hard metal roof, rubber tires, and completely closed windows. **The areas under the stands, concession stand area, park pavilion or dugouts are NOT considered safe.** All parties will be urged to remain at the facility until conditions improve or play has been canceled for the day. All individuals have the right to leave a site or activity, without fear of repercussion or penalty, in order to seek a safe structure or location if they feel that they are in danger from impending severe weather activity.

Resumption of Activities

Criteria For Safe Return to the Practice/Game Area: Players, coaches, officials, support personnel and spectators should not return to the practice/game area until the following conditions have been met; 1) Thirty (30) minutes have passed since the "flash/bang" count is greater than 30, the last lightning flash or the last sound of thunder and/or the lightning detector indicates that lightning is greater than 20 miles away. 2) Condition 1 has been met and the "All Clear" signal is given by appropriate game official.

- Each time the "flash/bang" count goes below 30, lightning is observed and/or thunder is heard, the "30-minute clock" is to be reset.
- Blue skies in the local area and/or a lack of rainfall are not adequate reasons to breach the 30-minute return-to-play rule. Lightning can strike up to ten (10) miles away from the rain shaft of a storm.

Signal to Resume Play: If the weather clears and Park Staff deem it safe for play to resume, two short blasts of the air horn will signify the "All Clear". Park Staff and the Umpire Crew Chief should also consider the safety of field conditions before giving the all clear signal. Park Staff and/or game officials will ensure that all fields are notified of play resumption.

CANCELATION OF PLAY

If, at the discretion of Park Staff and after consultation with the Umpire Crew Chief, continuation of play presents obvious safety concerns, play will be canceled for the remainder of the day. Park staff will have sole authority to make the final decision. If no Park Staff is available, then the final decision will fall to the Umpire Crew Chief.

Signal to Cancel Play: The Park Staff and/or Game Official will signal the cancellation of play by turning off all field lights and/or signaling with one long 15 second air horn blast. Park Staff will ensure that all fields are notified of closure.

Lightning Detection Procedures for Players and Teams during Non-Supervised Activities:

Appropriate precautions should be taken when participants use park facilities in the off season, during or outside of regular practice hours or any other times that no Park Staff are present. It will be the responsibility of the Head and Assistant Coaches to terminate practice. Therefore, it is recommended that the best and safest measure for coaches and players is that they seek shelter whenever you see thunderclouds forming and remain there until the storm passes. Just because you cannot see lightning does not mean you are not at risk if you are outdoors. Per the National Weather Service, other warning signs of impending bad weather include: sudden decrease in temperature, sudden change in humidity, increase in air movement, and visible dark storm clouds (though these are not always present during a lightning strike). In the event players are using the facilities without supervision you as a coach should take the time to educate your players and encourage them to use the FLASH-to-BANG method to monitor the proximity of lightning and to seek shelter whenever they see thunderclouds forming and remain until the storm passes. Remember: THE FLASH-to-BANG method is an approximation of the distance of the lightning. NO METHOD OF LIGHTNING DETECTION CAN DETECT EVERY STRIKE.

OTHER LIGHTNING SAFETY TIPS - (Obtained from National Weather Service and the 2006-2007 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook)

1. There should be no contact with metal objects (bleachers, fences, bats)
2. Avoid single or tall trees, tall objects, and standing in a group.
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 hard top metal roof that dissipates the lightning around the vehicle. Roll up the windows. Do not touch the sides of the vehicle.
4. The existence of blue skies and/or absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can strike 10 miles from the rain shaft.
5. DO NOT LIE FLAT ON THE GROUND
6. Avoid using a land line telephone. Cell phones are a safe alternative if in a safe structure.
7. Avoid standing water and open fields
8. If in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick grove of small trees.
9. If you feel your skin tingling, immediately crouch and grab your legs and tuck your head as described above to minimize your body's surface area.
10. Persons who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore, enact the EMS system and provide emergency care. If possible, move the victim to a safe location.
11. For additional information, refer to the National Lightning Safety Institute at www.lightningsafety.com