1.2 Severe Weather Safety Position Statement

June 9, 2020

To: MSYSA League Presidents and Delegates
From: Thomas K. Faro, MSYSA Executive Director
Re: Severe Weather Safety

Dear MSYSA League Presidents and Delegates:

Attached, you will find a copy of US Soccer’s Position Statement as it relates to severe weather. The attached position paper is fully endorsed and serves as MSYSA’s policy with respect to lightning, windstorms, and other severe weather conditions.

It is important to note, from the information provided by Pullen Insurance Service, Inc., that all thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. If you hear thunder you are in danger. The information that is attached states that anytime thunder is heard, a thunderstorm is close enough to pose an immediate lightning threat to your location.

Per US Soccer’s Position Statement, when you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If this time is thirty (30 seconds) or less, seek shelter. Wait thirty (30) minutes or more after hearing the last thunder before resuming activities.

It is strongly recommended, prior to practices that if thunderstorms are forecast, consider postponing activities to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.

Please carefully review the information attached. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us at the MSYSA State Office.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. Faro
MSYSA Executive Director
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cc: MSYSA Board of Directors
Each year, about 400 children and adults in the U.S. are struck by lightning while working outside, at sports events, on the beach, mountain climbing, mowing the lawn or during other outdoor activities. About 80 people are killed and several hundred more are left to cope with permanent disabilities. Many of these tragedies can be avoided. Finishing the game, getting a tan, or completing a work shift aren’t worth death or crippling injury.

- All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. Lightning kills more people each year than tornadoes.

- Lightning often strikes as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall. Many deaths from lightning occur ahead of the storm because people try and wait to the last minute before seeking shelter.

- You are in danger from lightning if you can hear thunder. If you can hear thunder, lightning is close enough that it could strike your location at any moment.

- Lightning injuries can lead to permanent disabilities or death. On average, 20% of strike victims die; 70% of survivors suffer serious long term effects.

- Look for dark cloud bases and increasing wind. Every flash of lightning is dangerous, even the first. Head to safety before that first flash. If you hear thunder, head to safety!
• Blue Skies and Lightning. Lightning can travel sideways for up to 10 miles. Even when the sky looks blue and clear, be cautious. If you hear thunder, take cover. At least 10% of lightning occurs without visible clouds in the sky.

**The Single Most Dangerous Place**
Outdoors is the most dangerous place to be during a lightning storm. When lightning is seen or thunder is heard, or when dark clouds are observed, quickly move indoors or into a hard-topped vehicle and remain there until well after the lightning storm ends. Listen to forecasts and warnings through NOAA Weather Radio or your local TV and radio stations. If lightning is forecast, plan an alternate activity or know where you can take cover quickly.

The U.S. lightning season is summer but lightning can strike year round! The Fourth of July is historically one of the most deadly times of the year for lightning. In summer, more people are outside, on the beach, golf course, mountains or ball fields. Outdoor jobs such as construction and agriculture, and outdoor chores such as lawn mowing or house painting are at their peak, putting those involved in danger.

**Safety Rules**
1. Postpone activities promptly. Don't wait for rain. Many people take shelter from the rain, but most people struck by lightning are not in the rain! Go quickly inside a completely enclosed building, not a carport, open garage or covered patio. If no enclosed building is convenient, get inside a hard-topped all-metal vehicle. A cave is a good option outside but move as far as possible from the cave entrance.
2. Be the lowest point. Lightning hits the tallest object. In the mountains if you are above tree line, you ARE the highest object around. Quickly get below tree line and get into a grove of small trees. Don't be the second tallest object during a lightning storm! Crouch down if you are in an exposed area.
3. Keep an eye on the sky. Look for darkening skies, flashes of lightning, or increasing wind, which may be signs of an approaching thunderstorm.

4. Listen for the sound of thunder. If you can hear thunder, go to a safe shelter immediately.
5. If you see or hear a thunderstorm coming or your hair stands on end, immediately suspend your game or practice and instruct everyone to go inside a sturdy building or car. Sturdy buildings are the safest place to be. Avoid sheds, picnic shelters, baseball dugouts, and bleachers. If no sturdy building is nearby, a hard-top vehicle with windows closed will offer some protection. The steel frame of the vehicle provides some protection if you are not touching metal.
6. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio. Coaches and other leaders should listen for a tone-alert feature
during practice sessions and games.

7. If you can't get to a shelter, stay away from trees. If there is no shelter, crouch in the open, keeping twice as far away from a tree as it is tall.
9. Get out of the water. It's a great conductor of electricity. Stay off the beach and out of small boats or canoes. If caught in a boat, crouch down in the center of the boat away from metal hardware. Swimming, wading, snorkeling and scuba diving are NOT safe. Lightning can strike the water and travel some distance beneath and away from its point of contact. Don't stand in puddles of water, even if wearing rubber boots.

10. Avoid metal! Drop metal backpacks, stay away from clothes lines, fences, exposed sheds and electrically conductive elevated objects. Don't hold on to metal items such golf clubs, fishing rods, tennis rackets or tools. Large metal objects can conduct lightning. Small metal objects can cause burns.
11. Move away from a group of people. Stay several yards away from other people. Don't share a bleacher bench or huddle in a group.

What to do if someone is struck by lightning:
- Call for help. Call 9-1-1 or your local ambulance service. Get medical attention as quickly as possible.
- Give first aid. If the victim has stopped breathing, begin rescue breathing. If the heart has stopped beating, a trained person should give CPR. If the person has a pulse and is breathing, address any other injuries.
- Check for burns in two places. The injured person has received an electric shock and may be burned. Being struck by lightning can also cause nervous system damage, broken bones, and loss of hearing or eyesight. People struck by lightning carry no electrical charge that can shock other people. You can examine them without risk.

Stay Informed About the Storm
Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or local media for the latest severe thunderstorm WATCHES and WARNINGS. Severe thunderstorms are those storms with winds in excess of 58 mph or hail larger than 3/4 inches in diameter. When conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop, a severe thunderstorm WATCH is issued.

Weather Service personnel use information from weather radar, satellite, lightning detection,
spotters, and other sources to issue severe thunderstorm WARNINGS for areas where severe weather is imminent. Remember, however, that ALL thunderstorms produce deadly lightning.

For more information visit the National Weather Service web site at http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/

Comments

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DON'T GET CAUGHT OUTSIDE
No place outside is safe when a thunderstorm is in the area. Get inside as soon as you hear thunder. Run to a substantial building or hard-topped metal vehicle as fast as you can. If you can't get to a safe building or vehicle:

✓ Avoid open areas. Don't be the tallest object in the area.
✓ Stay away from isolated tall trees, towers or utility poles. Lightning tends to strike the taller objects in an area.
✓ Stay away from metal conductors such as wires or fences. Metal does not attract lightning, but lightning can travel long distances through it.
✓ If you are with a group of people, spread out. While this actually increases the chance that someone might get struck, it tends to prevent multiple casualties, and increases the chances that someone could help if a person is struck.

IF SOMEONE IS STRUCK
Cardiac arrest is the immediate cause of death for those who die. Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and may need first aid immediately.

✓ Call for help. Call 9-1-1.
✓ Give first aid. Begin CPR if you are trained.
✓ Use an Automatic External Defibrillator if one is available. These units are lifesavers!
✓ Don’t be a victim. If possible, move the victim to a safer place. Lightning CAN strike twice.

ORGANIZED OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES
It's essential that people in charge of organized outdoor activities understand the dangers of lightning and have a lightning safety plan. Don't be afraid to ask. If you hear thunder, it's time to get to a safe building or vehicle. Speak out!

LEARN MORE ABOUT LIGHTNING SAFETY AT:
www.weather.gov/lightning
WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS!

Each year in the United States, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes and about 300 people struck by lightning. Of those struck, about 30 people are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be prevented. When thunderstorms threaten, get inside a building with plumbing and electricity, or a hard-topped metal vehicle!

The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent these tragedies. Many lightning victims say they were “caught” outside in the storm and couldn’t get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter. With proper planning, similar tragedies can be avoided.

Some people were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside a safe building or vehicle for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder. While 30 minutes may seem like a long time, it is necessary to be safe.

Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby!

WHAT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT LIGHTNING

- All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. Fortunately, people can be safe if they follow some simple guidelines when thunderstorms are forecast.
- Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall. Many lightning deaths occur ahead of storms before any rain arrives or after storms have seemingly passed and the rain has ended.
- If you can hear thunder, you are in danger. Don’t be fooled by blue skies. If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to pose an immediate threat.
- Lightning leaves many victims with permanent disabilities. While only about 10% of lightning victims die, many survivors must live the rest of their lives with intense pain, neurological disabilities, depression, and other health problems.

For more information, visit www.weather.gov/lightning

AVOID THE LIGHTNING THREAT

- Have a lightning safety plan. Know where you’ll go for safety and ensure you’ll have enough time to get there.
- Postpone activities. Consider postponing activities if thunderstorms are forecast.
- Monitor the weather. Once outside, look for signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm such as towering clouds, darkening skies, or flashes of lightning.
- Get to a safe place. If you hear thunder, even a distant rumble, seek safety immediately. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are best. A hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed is also safe. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- If you hear thunder, don’t use a corded phone except in an emergency. Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.
- Keep away from electrical equipment and plumbing. Lightning will travel through the wiring and plumbing if your building is struck. Don’t take a bath or shower, or wash dishes during a storm.

Lightning discharge on a golf green. Photo: E. Philip Krider