



## ETSU ATHLETIC TRAINING

Jerry Robertson BucSports Athletic Medicine Center

### Lightning Safety Policy

Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect intercollegiate athletics. Within the United States, the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) estimates that 100 fatalities and 400-500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes every year. While the probability of being struck by lightning is extremely low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and the proper safety precautions are not followed.

#### Weather Alert System and Chain of Command

- a. The head athletic trainer at the outdoor sporting event will be using Telvent to watch the weather. This system will allow us to see the approximate distance the inclement weather is from the ETSU campus and the estimated time of its arrival to the sporting event. This program will tell when there is lightning strikes within a 30 mile radius and as it moves closer.
- b. The game manager and the athletic trainer will obtain a weather report each day prior to practice or an event.
- c. The certified athletic trainer(s) outdoors covering the athletic event(s) will be responsible for informing coaches, athletes, game administrators, officials, and spectators when inclement weather or lightning is approaching and the activity must be suspended or postponed, and/or the field or venue must be evacuated.
  - An exception to this rule would be in the cases of men's and women's golf where the head coach would be responsible for suspending the activity in the absence of a certified athletic trainer. The head coach will be responsible for making prior arrangement with course officials to ensure that they are notified of approaching weather systems which could affect the game or practice sessions. Another exception would be cross country practicing off campus in which case the head coach would be responsible for suspending activity when inclement weather is approaching if no certified athletic trainer is present.

#### Suspension of Activity and Evacuation Plan

- a. The decision to suspend activity will be made by the sports medicine staff along with the game administrator and officials.
  1. The weather alerts from Telvent will alert us when there is lightning within 10miles
  2. Visible lightning in the vicinity



## ETSU ATHLETIC TRAINING

Jerry Robertson BucSports Athletic Medicine Center

- The “flash-to-bang” method can also be used when lightning is visible to estimate the distance lightning is from the area. The “flash-to-bang” method works as follows: begin counting on a lightning flash and stop counting with the first subsequent sound of thunder. Divide the time from lightning to thunder (seconds) by 5 to determine the distance (miles) of the lightning.
- b. Once it has been determined there is danger of a lightning strike, the certified athletic trainer covering the athletic event will notify the head coach, game administrator, and/or officials that the activity must be suspended. A subsequent horn, whistle, or announcement will summon athletes from the playing field.
  - At 8 miles out Baseball, and Softball will tarp and cover their field as quickly as possible and take cover in their expected evacuation site.
- c. Immediately following the announcement to suspend activity, all athletes, coaches, officials, and support staff should evacuate the playing field to the nearest enclosed, grounded structure. Suggested safe evacuation shelter sites at East Tennessee State University are as follows:
  - **Baseball Game or Practice:** Visiting team will go to their bus and Home team will go to the team vans.
  - **Softball Game or Practice:** Visiting team will go to their bus, and Home team will take shelter in their vehicles.
  - **Men’s/Women’s Soccer Game or Practice:** Visiting team will go to their bus. Home team will go to the women’s restroom.
  - **Men’s/Women’s Tennis Match or Practice:** Visiting team will go to their Vans/Bus and home team will take shelter in their vehicles.
  - **Golf Match or Practice:** Evacuate to the course to the clubhouse or restrooms.
  - **Cross Country Race Practice:** Evacuate to ETSU/MSHA Athletic Center if possible, or another suitable structure along the course. A ditch without water is a last resort.
    - If you are unable to seek shelter immediately, seek the nearest flat area or a ditch without water. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of your feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees, and lower your head. Minimize your body’s surface area in contact with the ground – do NOT lie flat.
  - **Triathlon Race/Practice:** Evacuate to ETSU/MSHA Athletic Center if possible, or another suitable structure along the course. A ditch without water is a last resort.



## ETSU ATHLETIC TRAINING

Jerry Robertson BucSports Athletic Medicine Center

- If you are unable to seek shelter immediately, seek the nearest flat area or a ditch without water. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of your feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees, and lower your head. Minimize your body's surface area in contact with the ground – do NOT lie flat.
- d. In case of game situations, spectators will also be informed of the threatening weather. Once the game officials have suspended the activity, a member of the sports information or game management staff will make an announcement via the public address system and recommend that fans evacuate the field to an enclosed shelter area. **The ETSU sports medicine staff is NOT responsible for spectator safety from lightning or other severe weather after an appropriate warning announcement has been made by the game management staff.**

### Resumption of Activity

- a. The decision to resume athletic activity will be made by the certified athletic trainer responsible for covering the event, along with the game officials, and game administrator. The decision to resume activity will be based on one of the following criteria:
  - a. An “all clear” message from Telvent, indicating that the area is lightning free and it is safe to resume activity. This message will be sent from the alert system 30 minutes following the last lightning strike in a 10 mile radius of campus.
  - b. At least thirty (30) minutes AFTER the last lightning strike within a 10 mile radius according to the “flash-to-bang” method