

APS Lightning/Thunderstorm Policy and Procedures

Updated: September, 2022

Overview: This document outlines what to do in the event of Lightning or Thunderstorm, the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) Athletic Department will abide by the guidelines for lightning and thunder safety set forth by the National Federation of State High School Association ([NFHS](#)), the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee ([NFHS SMAC - Lightning Position Statement](#)) and the New Mexico Activities Association SMAC ([NMAA SMAC - Lightning Protocol](#)). In addition, the National Athletic Trainers Association ([NATA](#)) position on lightning safety for athletics and recreation.

Responsibilities and Authority (NMAA Bylaw 7.9.6, 7.10.1, and 7.10.6)

It is the responsibility of the school athletic director (AD), the athletic trainer (AT), coaches and/or designee to monitor weather conditions at school or home sites (e.g. on-campus events, practices, and/or shared facilities). The school AD is responsible for establishing a chain of command that identifies a specific person (or role) with unquestionable authority, to determine when it's necessary to remove individuals, including spectators, from outdoor facilities and activities with instruction to seek safe shelter (See Safety Guidelines for appropriate shelters). During sub varsity games or at shared facilities, if the home AT is not present, the school AD needs to identify whomever is covering to establish roles and responsibilities for the event. Event officials and event management have joint authority to suspend or postpone play due to inclement weather conditions. It is the responsibility of those referenced above to closely monitor weather when ever-changing weather conditions are evident. "On-site medical professionals/ATs should also be consulted and included in the decision-making process. When in doubt, err on the side of safety" (NMAA Lightning protocol).

Monitoring the Weather - Criteria for Suspending Play (NMAA Bylaw 7.9.6 and 7.10.6)

During the contest, the designee to monitor weather conditions must be aware of any potential thunderstorms that may form during competitions. If lightning is detected within 10 miles, the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location, take shelter immediately! APS Athletics Department will be using [WeatherBug \(the spark function\)](#) as the official weather app to monitor an approaching thunderstorm. Flash - to - Bang can also be used, especially when internet coverage is not working properly. When a flash is observed, start counting in seconds and divide by 5 when you hear thunder, this helps to determine how far away lightning is from your location. For each 5 second count, lightning is 1 mile away.

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[Returning to Participation \(NMAA Bylaw 7.9.6 and 7.10.6\)](#)

Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of lightning is witnessed prior to resuming play. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30 minutes count, the clock should be reset and another 30 minute count should begin. The WeatherBug app also tracks in a 30 minute timeframe, if needed.

[Safety Guidelines \(NMAA, NATA and NFHS Position Statements Referenced\)](#)

- If play is suspended the fields and stands should be cleared
- Appropriate Shelter:
 - Fully enclosed, substantial building with plumbing, electricity, and a landline
 - Vehicle, fully enclosed with a metal roof and the windows closed
- Do Not Take Shelter:
 - Under or near trees
 - Flagpoles or light poles
 - Open shelters such as storage sheds, dugouts, gazebos, and/or tents
- Avoid being the highest point in an open field, in contact with, or proximity to the highest point.
- Assume the lightning safe position (crouched on the ground, on the balls of your feet, feet together, head lowered with ear covered), limiting your contact with the ground. Do not lay flat.
- People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge, so it's safe to touch them. If possible, move the patient to a safe location to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Call 911 to activate local EMS, lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac arrest or respiratory arrest need emergency help quickly. Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.