



Sandy City Parks & Recreation

Weather/Lightning Safety Plan for Outdoor Recreation Games or Activities

“If you can see it, flee it; If you can hear it, clear it” – National Lightning Safety Institute

Lightning is one of the leading weather-related causes of death and injury in the United States. Most people do not realize that they can be struck by lightning even when the center of a thunderstorm is 10 miles away and there are blue skies overhead.

The purpose of this plan is to provide a safe environment for all participants and staff. Having a lightning safety plan will not 100% guaranteed total safety, but the following guidelines will greatly minimize the lightning hazard to people. These guidelines are to be used to help those responsible for making decisions concerning the cancellation, suspension, or restarting of games or activities:

1. Recreation staff has complete authority to enforce these guidelines. Staff must immediately notify the Recreation Coordinator or Manager and provide them with specifics of the condition(s). In the absence of recreation staff, volunteer coaches must follow these guidelines.
2. **Lightning Distance** – When lightning is first seen and/or thunder is heard and if that time is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is within 6 miles and is dangerous. At this time, all in attendance at the outdoor game or activity should immediately go to their cars or enter an enclosed building. The threat of lightning continues for much longer than most people realize! For general information on lightning and thunder see page 2.
3. **Thirty-Minute Rule** – Once the game or activity has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes following the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder prior to resuming the game or activity. If lightning is observed or thunder is heard again, the 30 minute period starts over. After the **Thirty-Minute Rule** has expired and if the environment and facility conditions are deemed safe by Sandy Recreation Staff, the game or activity may resume.
 - 3.1. **Youth & Adult weekday games or activities** – In most cases, once the decision has been made to clear the area and seek shelter the current game or activity, as well as those who fall within the **Thirty-minute Rule**, will be canceled for the night. **Exception** – Adult softball games that are not affected by the **Thirty-minute Rule** will be played as scheduled if the environment and facility conditions are deemed safe by Sandy Recreation Staff!
 - 3.2. **Youth & Adult Saturday games or activities** – Once the decision has been made to clear the area and seek shelter, the current game or activity, as well as those who fall within the **Thirty-minute Rule**, will be canceled. Games or activities not affected by the **Thirty-minute Rule** will be played as scheduled if the environment and facility conditions are deemed safe by Sandy Recreation Staff!
 - 3.3. **Races & Special Events** – Once the decision has been made to clear the area and seek shelter, the **Thirty-Minute Rule** will be initiated.
4. Common sense is the best rule when dealing with lightning. The decision should err on the side of being safe & conservative – lightning should be taken seriously.
5. Any time a coach wants to pull his/her team from the game or activity, or if a parent wants to remove his/her child from the game or activity, due to inclement weather, Sandy Recreation will not prevent them from doing so and there will be no penalty taken against that team, coach, or parent. These situations still follow the above **Thirty-Minute Rule**.
6. Refusal by coaches or staff to abide by these guidelines could result in disciplinary action by Sandy City Recreation.
 - 6.1. For the 1st offense, coaches will forfeit the opportunity to coach their team for seven (7) days.
 - 6.2. For the 2nd offense, coaches will be suspended from coaching the remainder of the season or year.
 - 6.3. Game officials and Recreation Staff will be required to follow these guidelines. Any guideline violations could result in disciplinary action determined by the Recreation Coordinator and Manager.
7. At any time, if the facility and/or field conditions or weather conditions are deemed unsafe, the Recreation Staff reserves the right to cancel or postpone any game or activity.

High Winds

When a high wind warning is issued by the National Weather Service (NWS), outdoor activities shall not operate within close proximity of trees, power lines, and other potential hazards. The NWS defines a high wind warning as sustained wind speeds of 40 mph or greater lasting for 1 hour or longer or 58 mph or greater for any duration of time. Sandy Recreation Staff may, at any time, deem conditions unsafe and cancel or postpone any game or activity.

Weather Delays

If inclement weather occurs before the start of play, then stops before the scheduled game time, play will continue if field conditions are deemed safe. If inclement weather continues into the scheduled play time, Recreation Staff will invoke a 10 minute weather delay. After the 10 minute weather delay expires, staff will then decide if the weather and fields are suitable for play or if games should be declared canceled. **Note: The *Thirty-minute Rule* must be followed for lightning and/or thunder.**

Disclaimer

This plan is intended to reduce the risk of injury or death from weather related events. However, due to unpredictability of weather, there is no guarantee this plan will prevent injury or death.

General Information on Lightning and Thunder

- ❖ **Lightning's behavior** is random and unpredictable. Preparedness and quick response are the best defenses towards the lightning hazard.
- ❖ **When should activities be stopped?** The sooner activities are stopped and people get to a safe place, the greater the level of safety. In general, a significant lightning threat extends outward from the base of a thunderstorm cloud about 6 to 10 miles. Therefore, people should move to a safe place when a thunderstorm is 6 to 10 miles away. Also, you should account for the time it will take to get to safety.
- ❖ **If you see lightning; please report it to Sandy Recreation Staff.** The ability to see lightning varies depending on the time of day, weather conditions, and obstructions such as trees, mountains, etc. In clear air, and especially at night, lightning can be seen from storms more than 10 miles away provided that obstructions don't limit the view of the thunderstorm.
 - If you can't see the lightning, just hearing the thunder means lightning is likely within striking range.
 - Lightning does not "decide" where it will strike until it's descending from the cloud and is about 30 miles from the ground or object that's going to be struck. Thus, short objects in an open area can be struck by lightning even if a tall object is nearby.
 - If you cannot find shelter, here are some things to stay away from: playgrounds, trees, lights and metal poles, open areas, bodies of water, metal fences, dugouts, open pavilions, sports equipment, bikes, etc. Seek enclosed indoor shelter or a fully enclosed metal-topped automobile.
 - If you feel your skin tingle or your hair stand on end, squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact with the ground. **DO NOT lie down.**
- ❖ **If you hear thunder; please report it to Sandy Recreation Staff.** Thunder can usually be heard for a distance of about 10 miles provided that there is no background noise. (Traffic, wind, and precipitation may limit the ability to hear thunder less than 10 miles). If you hear thunder, it's a safe bet that the storm is within ten miles.
- ❖ **Vehicle Safety.** If lightning is occurring and enclosed shelter is not available, get inside a fully enclosed automobile (fully enclosed metal-topped) and keep the windows up. Avoid touching any metal or turning on electrical devices. The metal frame acts as a conductor of electricity, and if hit, will channel the lightning strike away from your body.
- ❖ Avoid using **cell phones**. Use phones **ONLY** in an emergency.

"Remember, When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!" - NOAA