

LIGHTNING INTERRUPTION GUIDELINES FOR LACROSSE

The Problem

The instructions to officials about when to stop or postpone a game due to lightning have generally been vague. If an official knew how to determine distance to a strike by counting the flash to bang time, he or she was left wondering, in face of obvious pressure, when to stop the game. The question remained if there's a strike ___ miles away, what does that mean?

"30-30"

30 Seconds – STOP: Stop the game when there is a 30 second or less "flash to bang" (thunder) time. At 30 seconds "flash to bang," the lightning strike is 6 miles away.

The game should be stopped earlier if there are extraordinary circumstances regarding getting everyone to safe shelter. Safe shelter is defined as a solid building with plumbing and electricity or, secondarily, motor vehicles with metal roofs and the windows rolled up.

30 minutes – RESUME: Resume the game no sooner than 30 minutes after the last visible lightning flash or thunder.

Determining the Distance to a Lightning Strike

The distance to a lightning strike can be determined by using "flash to bang [thunder]" counting method. Sound travels one mile every 5 seconds. When lightning is sighted, count the seconds until you hear thunder. If five seconds elapse, the lightning strike was one mile away. Ten seconds indicate the lightning is two miles away...thirty seconds indicate the lightning is six miles away. If a stopwatch is not available, an official's beeper can be used for 20 seconds of the count to increase accuracy.

Lightning Detectors

Officials concerned about the distraction of counting or measuring the "flash to bang" time can consider several options:

- Before the game starts, arrange to have the institution provide a lightning detector (device) and, hopefully, someone trained to use it.
- Buy a lightning detector that signals when the lightning strikes are within 25, 12, 6, etc. miles. One such device (\$80) is described at the following web site:
<http://www.strikealert.com/ProductInfo.htm>

References for the 30-30 Guideline

The 30-second guideline to stop the game: the NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook.

The 30-minute wait to resume: The National Lightning Safety Institute (NLSI).

Credits

Lacrosse officials Keith Markey, MD, Dave White and Dan Larsen developed these guidelines.

Lightening Policies

Game Interruption - Lightning

The decision to suspend a game due to lightening will be made by the referees/umpires on the field at the time of play. If two games are being played at the same time, the decision made by officials/umpires at one field will be immediately communicated to the other field and followed.

A weather committee comprised of the Chief Referee for the men's competition, the Chief Umpire for the women's competition, and representatives from the host committee will communicate daily to monitor weather forecasts and communicate possible weather concerns to officials and umpires. They or their appointees will be instructed to actively look for signs of bad weather throughout each game and notify the committee if severe weather becomes dangerous.

If this committee feels that play should be interrupted at any time, then they have the power to go onto the field and tell the nearest official to suspend play immediately. The time of the stoppage must be noted by the head on-field official.

In the absence of technology to assist with weather evaluation, games will be suspended when the "flash-to-bang" count for lightning reaches no less than 30 seconds. Once a game is suspended, the referees/umpires will assist event staff in quickly evacuating teams and spectators. Teams will be taken to their respective locker room and spectators will be instructed to proceed to safe shelter (their automobiles or adjacent buildings).

Players may take the field, and spectators may return to the stands, no sooner than 30 minutes after the last visible lightening flash or sound of thunder. The decision to resume play will be made by the on-field officials in consultation with the weather committee.

Resumption of Play following a Game Interruption

If a game is stopped under the above circumstances, the remaining time will be played as soon as possible with the score resuming from the stoppage point. The decision as to when the game will be resumed will be made by the games committee.

Teams will be allowed to warm up following a game interruption as follows:

- If the delay is not more than 30 minutes, a 10-minute warm-up will be allowed
- If the delay is between 30 and 60 minutes, a 15-minute warm-up will be allowed.
- If the delay is more than 60 minutes, a 20-minute warm up will be allowed.

By mutual consent of both coaches, the above warm-up times may be shortened.

Excessive Heat

Water breaks of no greater than 1:30 minutes in length will be incorporated into each game if, in the opinion of attending medical personnel, they become necessary. In women's play, those breaks will be taken as close to the mid-point of each half as possible after a goal or during a dead ball situation. In men's play, those breaks will be taken as close to the mid-point of each quarter as possible after a goal or during a dead ball situation.

Note: the following policies were drafted after reviewing similar policies of the following organizations: IFWLA; ILF; NATA; NCAA; NFHS.