



From the desks of President DiConzo and Doug Gilbert:

Heard that there may have been some inconsistencies in handling the inclement weather events on Friday night and want to address it with this e-mail. This is not the be all, end all answer to every question but I felt very comfortable with my preparation before starting the game on Friday night.

Review the "Guidelines on handling practices and contests during lightning or thunder disturbances" on page 102 in the rule book. Arrive at the site early so you can discuss things with the AD.

I asked the AD if he had a Lightning Strike Meter? (The AD did not have a meter but had a lightning strike app on his phone. He tested it that afternoon during a storm and it was picking up lightning strikes 15 miles away)

I asked if he had a weather app with active radar? (He did and would be watching it through-out the game).

I asked where the coaches and athletes would go in the event of a storm? (The buses would be parked next to the field and the coaches already knew they should go there)

I asked where the officiating crew could go? (The crew could go to their cars or the announcers booth)

I told him that the Timer would have a radio up in the booth and if he had a lightning strike with-in 15 miles or a storm cell that could threaten us to use the radio to warn the crew to be on the look-out.

Friday night the back judge saw one lightning bolt off in the distance but we did not hear any thunder. After the game I asked the AD about it and he said his app did not pick-up a lightning strike but he was monitoring a storm cell that passed about 20 miles north of us.

Below are the Guidelines as listed in the MPA football bulletin. I think they are better than our rule book and now have a copy of these with my gear.

WEATHER CONDITIONS The safety of athletes (participants), spectators, coaches/directors, school personnel, and all others present at an athletic contest must be the first and foremost concern to the contest officials and building administrators.

1. When an interscholastic contest has been scheduled and dangerous playing conditions exist or severe weather is anticipated, the following should be considered:

a. Prior to beginning an athletic contest, when severe weather is anticipated, the head contest official and the principals of each school, or their designees, will meet to review the suspension and/or postponement procedures. This would include any playing rule book coverage.

b. The host school administrator will be responsible for informing contest officials, visiting school administrators and, if applicable, the individual responsible for public address announcements of designated shelter areas.

c. When lightning is observed or thunder is heard near a contest conducted outdoors, play should be suspended.

d. If any other life-threatening condition occurs, play should be suspended immediately, and predetermined directions to safe locations will be announced.

2. When a suspension of a contest occurs, the following should be considered:

a. If the suspension is forty-five minutes or greater, resuming later should be considered. b. Play shall not be resumed until 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or clap of thunder.

c. When it appears that weather conditions are no longer a threat to the safety of participants, spectators, or contest officials, administrators from all schools involved will meet with the head contest official to determine if play will continue.

d. If play is to be resumed, contestants will be given at least a fifteen-minute warm-up period prior to competition.

3. If evacuation is necessary, the following should be considered:

a. If lightning is imminent or a thunderstorm is approaching, all personnel, athletes and spectators should evacuate to available safe structures or shelters. A list of the closest safe structures should be announced and displayed on placards at all athletic venues.

b. All personnel, athletes and spectators should be clearly informed of available safe structures or shelters in the event a thunderstorm approach. A list of the closest safe structures should be announced. The person in authority must be aware of the amount of time it takes to get to each structure and the number of persons each structure can safely hold. For large events, time needed for evacuation is increased and there must be a method (i.e., announcement over loudspeaker) for communicating the need for evacuation and directing both athletes and spectators to the appropriate safe shelters.

c. The most ideal structure is a fully enclosed, substantial building with plumbing, electrical wiring, and telephone service, which aids in grounding the structure. A fully enclosed automobile with a hard metal roof and rolled up windows is also a reasonable choice. School buses are an excellent lightning shelter that can be utilized for large groups of people. However, it is important to avoid contact with any metal while inside the vehicle.

4. Avoid using shower facilities for safe shelter and do not use showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm as the current from a local lightning strike can enter the building via the plumbing pipelines or electrical connections. It is also considered unsafe to stand near utilities, use corded telephones or headsets during a thunderstorm, due to the danger of electrical current traveling through the telephone line. Cellular and cordless telephones are considered reasonably safe and can be used to summon help during a thunderstorm. When caught in a thunderstorm without availability or time to reach safe structures, you can minimize the risk of lightning-related injury by following a few basic guidelines:

⌚ Avoid being the highest object. Seek a thick grove of small trees or bushes surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch.

⌚ Avoid contact with anything that would be attractive to lightning. Stay away from freestanding trees, poles, antennas, towers, bleachers, baseball dugouts, metal fences, standing pools of water, and golf carts.

⌚ Crouch down with legs together, the weight on the balls of the feet, arms wrapped around knees, and head down with ears covered.