According to information collected by NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Colorado was ranked 3rd for highest lightning deaths from 1990-2003, with 39 deaths occurring during that time period. During that same time period, Colorado was also ranked 3rd when weighted for population. Because lightning is a big concern, coaches, parents and players need to be aware of appropriate safety procedures.

LIGHTNING POLICIES

The following steps are modified from those recommended by the NCAA and the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) in the event of lightning or severe storm warning:

1. Monitor threatening weather conditions and make the decision to remove a team or individuals from an athletic venue or event.

2. Monitoring should include obtaining a weather report prior to a practice or competitive event. Be aware of potential thunderstorms that may form. Be aware of National Weather Service-issued (NWS) thunderstorm "watches" and "warnings" as well as the signs of thunderstorms developing nearby. "Watch" means conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in an area; "Warning" means that severe weather has been reported in an area and for everyone to take proper precautions.

3. Be aware of how close lightning is occurring. Count the seconds using the flash-to-bang (flash of lightning-to-clap of thunder) method. Count the seconds and divide by five, which gives you the distance, in miles, that the lightning strike occurred. By the time the flash-to-bang count is 30 seconds, all individuals should have moved to safety. Be alert at the first sign of lightning or thunder and judge the time necessary to evacuate all individuals from the athletic venue.

Flash-to-Bang: Count seconds from lightning flash to thunder bang, divide by 5 to determine how many miles away lightning strike occurred. Based on this information, you should clear the fields at 6 miles or 30 seconds.

CLEARING THE FIELDS

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Once a decision has been made by a coach or the athletic trainer, all players need to seek shelter in their own car or a supervised car of a teammate. If no car is available, a permanent enclosed shelter is a safe option. Covered but open structures are not safe.

An average lightning delay lasts approximately 30 minutes, at minimum. We would also ask that parents and coaches set the example by remaining in their cars or under shelter until the signal to resume training is given.

We are asking for the help of all coaches, managers and parents to make sure this procedure is followed. All lightning or storm delays will be communicated by one of two methods: 1) verbal direction from a director of coaching or athletic trainer or 2) the blow of an air horn. The same communication will signify the end of the delay.

Colorado Lightning Resource Page

Lightning Saftey Coach Guide (.pdf)

National Weather Service Lightning Safety

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