

Weather Policy for Safety in the Event of Thunder and Lightning

Somers Soccer Association

Purpose: Prevent injury and death due to thunderstorms while playing outdoor soccer games and practices.

DRAFT - Somers Soccer Association Policy on Safety in the Event of Thunder and Lightning:

In accordance with guidelines from the National Weather Service, Somers Soccer Association's *Policy on Safety in the Event of Thunder and Lightning* is as follows:

If anyone (coach, referee, other adult, or youth) hears thunder or sees lightning during an outdoor soccer game or practice, stop play immediately and seek shelter in a safe place indoors. No place outdoors is safe to shelter.

Safe shelters are: A metal hard-topped vehicle (car, van, SUV, etc.) with the windows closed or a building with electricity and/or plumbing. **Do not shelter** in a dugout, picnic pavilion, under or near trees, or buildings without electricity or plumbing.

You must remain in a safe place for 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder or lightning strike.

For outdoor games: If thunder or lightning continues after 30 minutes of waiting time during a soccer game, the referee shall call off the game. Each time thunder or lightning occurs, you must add 30 minutes before resuming play. If the game resumes after the appropriate waiting time and thunder or lightning occurs again, the referee shall call off the game.

For outdoor practice/training: If thunder or lightning occurs at a practice and doesn't let up after waiting 30 minutes after the last thunder clap or lightning strike for a total time of 30 minutes, the coach shall call off the practice. If there is a long waiting period and practice resumes, the coach may cut the practice short so that it ends on or near the scheduled time.

Rescheduling a game that was canceled due to a thunderstorm or other bad weather events:

Reschedule the game on the field or in the town as originally scheduled. The original home team is responsible for all field and referee fees. Every attempt to reschedule the game should be made, including playing two games in one day or scheduling a weeknight game.

If a reschedule cannot be agreed upon, the game stands as un-played with no score recorded.

CJSA Recommendations:

The Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (CJSA) thunderstorm policy differs somewhat from the National Weather Service (NWS) policy (see "Facts and Standards"). CJSA says that if you see lightning and the sound of thunder is within 30 seconds of the lightning strike, seek safe shelter.

Specifically, apply the 30-30 rule: When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If this time is 30 seconds or less, seek proper shelter. If you can't see the lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good back-up rule. Wait 30 minutes or more after hearing the last thunder before leaving shelter." (CJSA) But then they say, "Remember, if you can hear the thunder, you are within reach of lightning."

This is contradictory to their first statement about applying the 30-30 rule.

Other soccer clubs in Connecticut have the following policies which are aligned with either the NWS or the CJSA. New Canaan Football Club follows the CJSA guidelines which says if you see lightning, take shelter (apply the 30-30 rule), whereas the Farmington Soccer Club is more in alignment with the National Weather Service which says if you hear thunder, seek safe shelter.

Farmington Soccer Club (FSC) states that if lightning or thunder is evident, immediately vacate the field and head for shelter. Remain off the field for 30 minutes from the last occurrence of thunder or lightning.

FSC also has a game cancellation and rescheduling policy. "All games canceled due to weather should be rescheduled as originally scheduled at the home team fields. The original home team is responsible for all field and referee fees. Every attempt to reschedule the game should be made, including playing two games in one day or scheduling a weeknight game. If a reschedule cannot be agreed upon, the game stands as unplayed with no score recorded."

The New Canaan Football Club (NCFC) has lightning procedures which seem to follow the CJSA policy on lightning. They say that "games in any town are to be adjourned until 30 minutes after the last lightning strike. If there is obviously inclement or dangerous weather ..., please use common sense, take shelter and remain off the fields until 30 minutes has passed since the last lightning strike." In other words, NCFC focuses mainly on the event of lightning rather than thunder.

Facts and Standards:

The National Weather Service (NWS) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) states that if you hear thunder, lightning is not far away. Their adage is "When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors" (NOAA).

While most lightning casualties occur at the beginning of an approaching storm, a significant number of lightning deaths occur after the thunderstorm has passed. If thunder is heard, then the storm is close enough for a lightning strike. It is very important to seek safe shelter immediately.

Lightning Fact: Lightning often strikes more than three miles from the center of the thunderstorm, far outside the rain or thunderstorm cloud. "Bolts from the blue" can strike 10-15 miles from the thunderstorm. (NWS)

Lightning Fact: Many lightning casualties occur because people do not seek shelter soon enough. No game is worth death or life-long injuries. Adults are responsible for the safety of children (NWS).

Run to a safe building or vehicle when you first hear thunder, see lightning or observe dark threatening clouds developing overhead.

Safe shelters are: A building with electricity and/or plumbing or a metal-topped vehicle with the windows closed.

Unsafe shelters are: picnic shelters (like open-sided pavilions), dugouts, and small buildings without plumbing or electricity. If you are outside, do not seek shelter under or near trees.

NWS recommends that once inside the safe shelter, follow these important safety tips:

- Stay off corded phones. You can use cellular or cord less phones;
- Do not run water;
- Stay away from windows and doors...;
- Do not ... lean against concrete walls.

How long to stay inside: Stay inside until 30 minutes after you hear the last clap of thunder [or see the last lightning strike]. Organizers of outdoor events should monitor the weather and evacuate participants as soon as they hear thunder.

NWS says that it's a good idea to post lightning safety rules in programs, flyers or signs so participants know what to do. Most importantly, keep an eye on the sky, listen for thunder, and keep up to date with the latest NWS forecasts.

References:

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Draft policy written by Susan Logan, Somers, CT. Susan has been involved in the Somers youth soccer programs for over 16 years as both a coach and a parent, and is Director of the Injury and Violence Surveillance Unit at the state Department of Public Health. She has a background in public health, injury prevention, and public health preparedness.