

UT Martin Athletic Department Lightning Policy

Lightning strikes to individuals are rare but can be deadly. It is also the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect athletic participation. Due to the nature of lightning and the arrangement of the university's athletic facilities there must be a policy in place to respond to the occurrence of lightning.

The National Severe Storms Laboratory, the National Athletic Trainers Association, and the NCAA recommends "as a minimum, by the time the leading edge of the storm is within 6 miles of the venue, all individuals should have left the athletics site and be wholly within a safer structure or location". When the decision has been made to delay participation, teams will report to their assigned Safe Structure. A Safe Structure is defined as "any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e., a building with plumbing and or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure". Teams will remain within these structures until thirty minutes after the last bolt of lightning has passed. Safe Structures will be assigned as follows:

- Softball – Skyhawk Baseball/Softball Fieldhouse
- Baseball – Skyhawk Baseball/Softball Fieldhouse
- Football - Bob Carroll Football Building
- Women's Soccer – Elam Center
- M & W Cross Country – Elam Center
- M & W Tennis - Tennis House or Elam Center
- Men's Golf - Bill Rhodes Golf Center, or Clubhouse
- Rodeo- Ned McWherter Ag Complex or Equine Center for practice

In the event of lightning, precautions must be taken to ensure the safety of fans as well as players. When lightning is detected within a minimum of 30 miles of the competition site, home team management shall utilize the public address system to inform those in attendance that inclement weather including lightning is within 30 miles and that patrons should be prepared to seek shelter. Additionally, home team management shall notify the game officials that inclement weather is moving into the area.

The UT Martin Department of Athletics subscribes to Telvent/DTN, Inc. which monitors inclement weather which may compromise the safety of our participants or fans. When a storm is in the vicinity of the University grounds, the weather service will notify game operations and members of the athletic training staff of the weather warning text message. When lightning is detected within 10 miles practice or competitions should stop and the athletes should exit to designated safe areas. The Telvent/DTN system will notice a member of the sports medicine staff by text message when 30 minutes has passed since the last strike within the 10 mile radius of campus.

Competition

Officials and the UT Martin Policy: If the officials are unaware of the UT Martin policy regarding lightning, the Athletic Trainer will inform them at game time of the policy. If lightning is present and a warning is issued or the Athletic Trainer decides to clear the fields, they will notify the officials and the field should be cleared.

If the team is asked to exit the field, they should go to the designated safe area and remain there until activity is allowed to resume by the game officials, coach or athletic trainers.

OVC Lightning Policy

1. The host institution's athletic trainer shall be responsible for monitoring weather activity leading up to and during the competition.
2. When lightning is detected within a minimum of 30 miles of the competition site, home team management shall utilize the public address system to inform those in attendance that inclement weather including lightning is within 30 miles and that patrons should be prepared to seek shelter. Additionally, home team management shall notify the game officials that inclement weather is moving into the area.
3. When lightning is detected or predicted within a minimum of 10 miles of the competition site, the competition shall be suspended. Competition may be resumed after 30 minutes of no detected or predicted lightning strikes within a 10-mile radius.
4. Home team management shall communicate this policy to the visiting team and to game officials prior to the start of competition.

Lightning Don'ts:

- Avoid using shower facilities for a safe structure and do not use showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm.
- Trees are not good options for shelter during a thunderstorm, especially lone or single trees.
- If caught outdoors with no shelter stay away from the tallest objects, crouch down with only the balls of your feet touching the ground. Try to minimize your body's surface area and minimize contact with the ground. DO NOT lie flat.
- Avoid using land line telephones except in emergency. Cellular or cordless phones are a safe option within a Safe Structure.

Safe Shelter:

1. A safe location is any substantial, frequently inhabited building. The building should have four solid walls electrical and telephone wiring, as well as plumbing, all of which aid in grounding a structure.
2. The secondary choice for a safer location from the lightning hazard is a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and the windows completely closed. It is important to not touch any part of the metal framework of the vehicle while inside it during ongoing thunderstorms.
3. It is not safe to shower, bathe, or talk on land line phones while inside of a safe shelter during thunderstorms (cell phones are OK).

Flash-to-Bang:

In the event, the Telvent/DTN system is unavailable, use the flash-to-bang method, begin counting when sighting a lightning flash. Counting is stopped when the associated bang (thunder) is heard. Divide this count by five to determine the distance to the lightning flash (in miles). For example, a flash-to-bang count of thirty seconds equates to a distance of six miles. Lightning has struck from as far away as 10 miles from the storm center. "If you hear it, clear it; if you see it, flee it"

Postpone or suspend activity if a thunderstorm appears imminent before or during an activity or contest, (irrespective of whether lightning is seen or thunder heard) until the hazard has passed. Signs of imminent thunderstorm activity are darkening clouds, high winds, and thunder or lightning activity.

NATA Recommendations for Lightning Safety

1. Established a chain of command that identifies who is to make the call to remove individuals from the field.
2. Name a designated weather watcher (A person who actively looks for the signs of threatening weather and notifies the chain of command if severe weather becomes dangerous.)
3. Have a means of monitoring local weather forecasts and warnings.

4. Designate a safe shelter for each venue.
5. Use the Flash-to-Bang count to determine when to go to safety. By the time the flash-to-bang count approaches thirty seconds all individuals should be already inside a safe structure.
6. Once activities have been suspended, wait at least thirty minutes following the last sound of thunder or lightning flash prior to resuming an activity or returning outdoors.
7. Avoid being the highest point in an open field, in contact with, or proximity to the highest point, as well as being on the open water. Do not take shelter under or near trees, flagpoles, or light poles.
8. Assume the lightning safe position (crouched on the ground, weight on the balls of the feet, feet together, head lowered, and ears covered) for individuals who feel their hair stand on end, skin tingle, or hear "crackling" noises. Do not lie flat on the ground.
9. Observe the following basic first aid procedures in managing victims of lightning strike:
 1. Survey the scene for safety.
 2. Activate local EMS.
 3. Lightning victims do not 'carry a charge' and are safe to touch.
 4. If necessary, move the victim with care to a safer location.
 5. Evaluate airway, breathing, and circulation, and begin CPR if necessary.
 6. Evaluate and treat for hypothermia, shock, fractures and/or burns.
10. All individuals have the right to leave an athletic site in order to seek a safe structure if the person feels in danger of impending lightning activity, without fear of repercussions or penalty from anyone.