

BUDA Guidelines on Lightning Safety

Adapted from the 2002-2003 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook Lightning Safety Guidelines

Lightning can be a significant threat to the safety of participants in outdoor athletic events like Ultimate. The odds of being struck by lightning are significantly reduced when proper safety precautions are taken. The following preventative steps should be taken by BUDA event coordinators in an effort to maintain the safety of participants and spectators.

- 1) Establish a chain of command to determine who is watching for a potential lightning threat, who makes the call to stop play and send individuals to safety.
- 2) Establish a means by which a lightning safety decisions and procedures will be communicated effectively to participants and spectators.
- 3) Establish a means to monitor local weather conditions and weather advisories/warnings both prior to and during the event.
- 4) Be aware of and be able to communicate to participants and spectators the location of the closest safe shelter. Safe Shelter includes the following:
 - A) First choice: Any frequently used building with electrical wiring and plumbing facilities which will help to ground the structure. Shower facilities should be avoided. Showers and other plumbing facilities should not be used during a storm event.
 - B) Second choice: Any fully enclosed vehicle with a hard top and closed windows. It is not the rubber tires that protect the occupants from a lightning strike, but the hard metal framework which dissipates the electric charge around the vehicle. It is important to not touch the sides of the vehicle.
- 5) Use the Flash-to-Bang method to determine when and if you need to send people to shelter. By the time the Flash-to-Bang count has reached 30 seconds, all individuals should be in a safe shelter location.

Flash-to-Bang: Begin counting when a lightning flash is sighted. Stop counting when the associated thunder is heard. Divide the count by 5 to determine how far away the lightning is. 30 seconds equals about 6 miles. Lightning has been known to strike from as far away as 10 miles, even under clear skies.
- 6) Wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before resuming play.
- 7) If you can't get to a safe shelter, try to avoid being the tallest object in an open field or on open water. Avoid other tall objects, metal objects, and water. Assume a crouch position with only the balls of your feet touching the ground, your arms wrapped around your knees, and your head lowered. Minimize contact with the ground. Do not lie flat.
- 8) Avoid using telephone land lines. Cell phones are safe provided the person has followed other safety guidelines.
- 9) If someone is struck by lightning, observe the following procedures:
 - 1) Survey the scene for safety
 - 2) Call 911
 - 3) Lightning victims are safe to touch. They do not carry a charge.
 - 4) If necessary, move victim carefully to a safer location
 - 5) Evaluate airway, breathing and circulation. Begin CPR if necessary.
 - 6) Evaluate and treat for hypothermia, shock, fractures, and/or burns.