

IHSAA SUGGESTED GUIDELINES ON HANDLING CONTESTS AND PRACTICES DURING LIGHTNING OR THUNDER DISTURBANCES



In the presence of lightning, thunder and other forms of severe weather, it is imperative that member schools have a plan to make decisions regarding the suspension and resumption of contests and practices. Those responsible for making these decisions must have clearly defined lines of communication to officials, coaches, competitors and spectators. Proactive planning, with repeated review of responsibilities, makes for a successful execution of procedures when they are needed.

The IHSAA recommends the following proactive planning steps be followed by member schools:

1. Assign responsible staff members to monitor local weather conditions before and during all practices and all contests.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safe areas.
3. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of practices and contests during the presence of lightning, thunder and other forms of severe weather, which might include the following:
 - a. Suspension of play criteria: when thunder is heard or lightning in any form (cloud-to-ground, cloud-to-cloud, etc.) is seen, which means that the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning, the suspension of play at contests and at practices is warranted and the execution of your school's emergency/severe weather action plan, including the taking of shelter immediately, is recommended.
 - b. Return to play criteria (thirty-minute rule): once play in a contest or practice has been suspended, resumption of play, if warranted, should not occur until at least thirty (30) minutes has passed since the last thunder was heard or the last flash of lightning was witnessed. Note that any thunder heard or lightning seen after the beginning of the 30-minute count resets the clock and another thirty (30) minute count begins.
4. Review annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel these guidelines and all associated criteria, plans and policies.
5. Inform student athletes of these guidelines and all associated criteria, plans and policies at start of season.