



# **LIGHTNING SAFETY POLICY for Intercollegiate Athletics at Kutztown University**



Last revised 5/25

# Lightning Safety Policy for Intercollegiate Athletics at Kutztown University

Developed May 2007 by Renard M Sacco  
Updated May 2008, August 2009, March 2010, August 2015  
LUpdated May 2020, April 2024, May 2025

The purpose of this document is to establish a written lightning safety policy for the Intercollegiate Athletics programs at Kutztown University. It is imperative that all Kutztown University athletic teams, coaches and support personnel are aware of lightning hazards and the specific safety shelter for their venue. The following policy is based on the specific recommendations as stated by the National Athletic Training Association (NATA) Lightning Safety position statement and the updated guidelines from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Sports Medicine Handbook.

**NCAA By17.01.2 Health and Safety Oversight.** *“...a member of the institution’s sports medicine staff has the unchallengeable authority to cancel or modify the workout for health and safety reasons.”*  
(Adopted: 1/12/04 effective 8/1/04)

In the event of lightning during an official sport practice or event, precautions must be taken to ensure the safety of both student-athletes and spectators. In any event, the attending licensed athletic trainer, in conjunction with game management staff and/or sport officials if necessary, will be responsible for monitoring inclement weather. ***In the event there is no licensed athletic trainer or other athletic administration personnel available, individual sport coaches will be responsible for monitoring inclement weather considering the guidelines set forth in this policy.***

The Department of Sports Medicine staff will utilize an online weather monitoring system to assist in determining participation status:

## **Schneider Electric MxVision Weather Sentry**

Kutztown University monitors severe weather conditions through **Schneider Electric MxVision Weather Sentry**, an on-line weather management service. It will provide instant alerts to lightening and impending severe weather approaching the Kutztown campus. The user can plot the location on the radar maps and set rules to notify when lightning occurs. This resource is also utilized by the Kutztown University Environmental Health & Safety Director. Should this system become unavailable, we will use the following secondary equipment or methods: 1) portable SkyScan “lightning detector” and/or 2) ‘Flash-to-Bang’. An email of the day’s hourly forecast will be available daily when appropriate.

## **Prior to Competition:**

A member of the KU Sports Medicine Staff and/or a Representative of the Athletics Department (RAD) will greet the official(s) and explain that a Licensed Athletic Trainer (LAT) will monitor the weather. If the LAT decides that there is imminent danger from lightning, they

will notify the official(s) to suspend play. If a LAT is not on-site or immediately available, then the authority is given to RAD, the official(s), or the Head Coach (in that order) to recommend suspension of play.

### **Criteria for suspension:**

#### **MxVision Weather Sentry (text or online) / SkyScan Lightning/Storm Detector:**

Whenever we have a detection of lightning within a zero (0) to eight (8) mile radius, we will inform the officials working the current game that lightning is nearby, and the game needs to be halted. A thirty (30) minute period, from the time of the last recorded strike, with no further detection will allow teams to resume the game.

If there are any readings in the 8-20 mile range, the LAT or RAD should alert the official(s) so action can be taken quickly if necessary.

**\*NOTE:** Lightning can reach six (6) miles from the point of its origin and does not need to be preceded by thunder or dark skies. The following ranges will be used:

**MxVision Weather Sentry:** Warning=0-8 miles; Caution=9-14 miles; Advisory=15-20 miles

#### **Utilization of the Flash-to-Bang Method:**

If the online monitoring system is not available, staff licensed athletic trainers, coaches and athletic staff will utilize the **Flash-to-Bang method:**

To use the flash-to-bang method:

- Count the seconds from the time lightning is sighted to when the clap of thunder is heard.
- Divide this number by five (5) to obtain how far away in miles the lightning is occurring.
- For example, if an individual counts 30 seconds between seeing the flash and hearing the bang, 30 divided by 5 equals 6; therefore, the lightning flash is approximately 6 miles away.
- As a minimum, the NCAA and the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) strongly recommend that all individuals leave the athletic site and reach a safe location by the flash-to-bang method of 30 seconds (6 miles).

#### **During Practice Activities:**

If a LAT is on-site, they will monitor for severe weather activity. If no LAT is on-site, the Coaches must be alert to any potential severe weather that may arise. A LAT may get a severe weather alert and contact the team coach via their cell phone. Once practice activities have been suspended, a minimum wait period of thirty (30) minute from the time of the last recorded strike, with no further detection, must be followed before teams are allowed to resume any practice activity. The coaches are expected to communicate with the Sports Medicine staff during this wait period for confirmation that severe weather has passed. In the event there is no LAT or other RAD personnel available, individual sport coaches will be responsible for waiting a minimum of thirty (30) minutes after the last visible strike before resuming activity, as stated above and recommended in the NATA Position Statement. The use of the online monitoring system in tracking the weather pattern will be informative in making this decision.

### **Evacuation of Playing Field:**

Immediately following the announcement of suspension of play all athletes, coaches, officials and support personnel are to evacuate to the nearest grounded structure as per the individual universities policy.

### **Evacuation of the Stands:**

Once a decision to suspend play has been made, a representative of the athletic department will announce to the fans:

***“Play has been suspended due to potentially serious weather conditions in the immediate area. Fans are advised to immediately seek shelter in the nearest enclosed grounded building.”***

### **Safe Structure:**

The primary choice for a safe structure is any fully enclosed, substantial building. Ideally, the building should have plumbing, electric wiring, and telephone service. If a substantial building is not available, a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and the windows completely closed is a reasonable alternative. See attached list of safe structures per venue.

### **Safe Structures by Venue:**

Stadium Activities/Football & Field Hockey/Tennis courts:

1. Keystone Hall (Football, etc.)
2. Student Rec Center (as available)
3. Riskey Hall (visiting FB team)

Keystone Hall Game Field (Soccer/Lacrosse):

1. Keystone Hall/O’Pake Fieldhouse

North Campus Practice & Game Fields:

#### **Baseball**

1. Lytle Hall
2. Academic Forum Bldg
3. Grim Science Bldg
4. Bathroom facility between SB/BB fields (**only on practice days**)

#### **Softball**

1. Grim Science Bldg
2. Boehm Science Bldg
3. Academic Forum Bldg
4. Bathroom facility between SB/BB fields (**only on practice days**)

#### **W Soccer/Lacrosse**

1. PA German Cultural Heritage Center
2. Grim Science Bldg
3. Boehm Science Bldg
4. Academic Forum Bldg

**Lightning and Aquatics Safety:**

The National Lightning Safety Institute (NLSI) provides recommendations for aquatic safety in the case of lightning. The indoor swimming facility located in Keystone Hall is grounded for protection against lightning. However, all student-athletes and individuals should be removed from the swimming pool. When lightning occurs, all student-athletes should also be removed from any therapy whirlpool located in the Sports Medicine facilities immediately.

*The Lightning Safety Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis with pertinent University Administration, Athletic Administration and Department of Sports Medicine personnel. Revisions will be authorized as needed.*

This document follows the recommendations of lightning safety for all athletics activities as noted in the NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook Guideline No. 1-D.