

MESA SOFTBALL LIGHTNING GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Lightning is a hazard that must be taken seriously by coaches, officials, parents, spectators, and participants. The average lightning strike is approximately 6 miles long. No lightning safety guidelines will give 100% guaranteed safety, but following these procedures may help to avoid a lightning injury or fatality.

Coaches, assistant coaches, and parents should monitor weather forecasts prior to conducting activity outdoors to be aware of any forecasted inclement weather. However, as you are aware, storms in Texas can appear quickly and without warning, especially in the spring.

As a method of gauging the distance of the lightning from the area of participation, utilize the “flash to bang” method. Upon seeing a lightning strike, count the amount of time until you hear the thunder. If the time from the moment you see the lightning until you hear the thunder is less than 40 seconds, then you must suspend the practice or other activity and make sure everyone finds proper shelter. If you cannot see the lightning, then assume it is too close and instruct everyone to seek proper shelter immediately. Once activities have been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes following the last sound of thunder or lightning flash prior to resuming the outdoor activity. If a practice is interrupted due to a lightning threat, the best rule of thumb is to cancel the practice and instruct the participants and spectators to return home.

The safest shelter from lightning is a building that has electrical wiring and plumbing facilities to help ground the building.

A secondary choice for shelter is a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and all windows tightly closed. However, do not touch the steering wheel, gear shift, ignition, any metal framework or sides of the vehicle. Convertibles, cars with fiberglass or plastic shells, and open framed vehicles are not shelter from lightning.

Dugouts, pavilions, rain shelters, or other open and unprotected structures **are not safe**.

MESA takes the safety and protection of our girls very seriously. At games, a MESA Board member or representative will ensure that the Lightning Guidelines and Procedures are followed. However, MESA board members and umpires are not present at practices to enforce the Lightning Guidelines and Procedures. Therefore, it is the responsibility of coaches and assistant coaches to strictly comply with the Lightning Guidelines and Procedures. MESA’s Lightning Guidelines and Procedures will be strictly enforced. If a coach or assistant coach (if the head coach is not present) fails to comply with the Lightning Guidelines and Procedures, she or he will be suspended from coaching. Getting that last out, letting that last player bat, etc., means nothing compared to the safety of our girls.