

Lightning action plan for Sport and Recreation Centres

Preventative measures:

- Identifying safe and unsafe structures during an electrical storm: No place is absolutely safe from lightning strikes however some places are much safer than others. Each NSWSR Centre should identify and inform staff of these relevant safe areas
- Regular monitoring of weather conditions through Bureau of Meteorology, Radar, lightning tracker, satellite etc

Safer areas include:

- Substantial enclosed buildings
- Low ground, sheltering in clumps of low bushes
- Trees of uniform height such as a forest
- Enclosed vehicles with windows closed – do not touch metal parts

Unsafe areas include:

- High ground
- Open areas
- Water
- Isolated or tall trees
- Close proximity to outdoor metal structures such as fences, gates, poles, seating and ropes courses
- Insubstantial outdoor structures such as picnic sheds and shade shelters
- Machinery such as mowers or unenclosed tractors

If caught outside during a storm and your hair stands on end or you hear buzzing/crackling noises in the air, you are within the field or charge of a lightning strike. Remove all metal objects (keys, badges, belts, etc); crouch down with feet together, head down and hands over your ears. It is safer to adopt this position if outdoors than to be in one of the unsafe situations above.

Criteria for the suspension and resumption of outdoor operations and activities

Generally, 10km is the minimum safe distance from a storm. The 30/30 rule is used to serve as a guide for the suspension and safe resumption of outdoor operations and activities.

The first part of the 30/30 rule is determined by counting the seconds from when you see a lightening 'flash' until you hear the thunder 'bang'. Sound travels at about 1 kilometre every 3 seconds, so a 30 second interval means the storm is approximately 10km away.

Staff should monitor the storm's approach and as the 'flash' to 'bang' count nears 30 seconds, people at risk should start to seek safe shelter. A flash to bang' count of 30 seconds or less requires immediate and urgent evacuation to safety.

The second part of the 30/30 rule provides the criteria for resuming activities. The recommended safe distance from a storm is 20km. A typical storm moves at 40km/h, so waiting 30 seconds after the last thunder is heard or lightening seen provides the safe 20km distance.

Blue sky and the absence of rain are not adequate reasons to resume activities.

The 30/30 rule is not an absolute rule. In mountainous terrain and in particular windy conditions, staff should use discretion, and the suspension of activities may need to occur sooner than previously prescribed.