

# CAROLINAS UMPIRE ASSOCIATION

## PROTOCOL FOR HANDLING CONTESTS DURING LIGHTNING OR THUNDER DISTURBANCES

This protocol provides direction for making decisions concerning the suspension and resumption of activities based on the presence of lightning or thunder.

1. Discuss the potential of disruptive weather conditions occurring during the contest at the pre-game umpire conference.
2. If the potential exists, confirm the details of an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safer areas and determine the amount of time needed to get everyone to a designated safe area:
  - a. A designated safe place is a substantial building with plumbing and wiring where people live or work, such as a school, locker room, or gymnasium. An alternate safe place from the threat of lightning is a fully enclosed (not convertible or soft top) metal car or school bus.
  - b. Umpires will **NOT** remain on the field or in the bench/dugout area during the weather-related delay.
3. Criteria for suspension and resumption of play:

**IF THE UMPIRE IN CHIEF IS NOTIFIED BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL (HEAD COACH, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR OR TRAINING STAFF) THAT THERE IS A LIGHTNING OR THUNDER CONCERN, STOP THE CONTEST AND CLEAR THE FIELD IMMEDIATELY.**

**IN THE ABSENCE OF DIRECTION FROM SCHOOL LEADERSHIP, THIS DECISION BECOMES THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UMPIRE IN CHIEF.**

- a. When thunder is heard or lightning is seen, the leading edge of the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for at least 30 minutes and vacate the outdoor activity to the previously designated safer location immediately.
- b. **30-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard, or lightning is witnessed\* prior to resuming play.**
- c. **Any subsequent thunder or lightning\* after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.**
- d. When lightning-detection devices or mobile phone apps are available, this technology could be used to assist in deciding to suspend play if a lightning strike is noted to be within 10 miles of the event location. However, you should never depend on the reliability of these devices and, thus, hearing thunder or seeing lightning\* should always take precedence over information from a mobile app or lightning-detection device.

\* At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty.