

## **St. Johnsbury Academy Athletics Lightning Safety Protocol**

**(This protocol has been designed using the guidelines set forth by the National Athletic Trainers' Association Recommendations for Lightning Safety and specifically tailored for athletics at St. Johnsbury Academy)**

**Research studies have shown that 15-30% of deaths from lightning occur during recreation activities and sporting events. (Korey Stringer Institute)**

**Remember the following statements regarding thunder and lightning:**

**"If you hear it – CLEAR IT!"**

**"If you see it – FLEE IT!"**

**"If thunder roars – GO INDOORS!"**

**The goal of this protocol is to have a safe and effective plan of action to postpone or suspend outdoor/indoor (pool) activity if a thunderstorm appears imminent before or during an activity (regardless of whether lightning is seen or thunder is heard) until the danger has passed.**

**Signs of imminent thunderstorm activity are: darkening clouds, high winds, and thunder or lightning activity. (Not all of these signs necessarily have to be present to be wary of electrical activity as sometimes a "pop up" storm will occur with no advanced warning)**

**It is not safe to shower, bathe, or talk on landline phones while inside a safe structure during thunderstorms. (Limited cell phone use is fine)**

- 1. A team consisting of the Athletic Director, Assistant Athletic Director, and the certified athletic trainer will be designated weather watchers (person(s) who actively look for signs of threatening weather) as well will make the call to remove individuals from playing surfaces/pool during electrical activity.**
- 2. The weather watchers team will inform our coaching staff, officials, and visiting team coaches about concerns of possible electrical activity upon their arrival on our campus. Those individuals will also be informed where to seek safe shelter when activities need to be suspended.**

3. The designated weather watchers will use the Weather Bug app along with local weather forecast information to monitor storm warnings. Removal of individuals from playing surfaces/pool will start to occur when noticeable signs of a storm (thunder or lightning is observed) or when a storm has been tracked to be within 10 miles of our campus and tracked to move closer. **(when the storm is approximately 15 miles away, officials and coaches need to be warned about possible approaching storm; at 10 miles the safety procedures evacuation plan should begin; at 6 miles the safety procedures evacuation plan should be complete)**
4. Three air horn sounds will indicate when removal of individuals from playing surfaces/pool should immediately occur. The designated weather watchers will contact each playing surface coach via a 2-way radio to confirm the plan of action. The pool area including the deck need to be evacuated immediately as well. The front desk of the Fieldhouse will alert the staff members at the pool regarding the evacuation.
5. All individuals need to be evacuated from the playing surfaces/pool immediately to a safe shelter. A safe shelter is defined as a building that has four solid walls (not a dug out or tent), electrical and telephone wiring, as well as plumbing as this all aids in grounding the structure. Another safe structure is a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and the windows completely closed (a school bus, car, or van).
6. **Safe structure designations for our campus are: the Fieldhouse, school buses (visiting teams), as well as the press boxes at the baseball and softball fields with all windows and doors closed. Coaches will gather with their athletes in their safe structure designated area and take attendance.**
7. Other safety measures that can be taken during a thunderstorm are: do not take shelter under or near trees or light poles and assume the lightning safe position (crouched on the ground, weight on the balls of the feet, feet together, head lowered, and ears covered) for individuals who feel their hair stand on end, skin tingle, or hear “crackling” noises. **DO NOT LIE FLAT ON THE GROUND!**
8. Once activities have been suspended, there will be a 30 minute waiting period following the last sound of thunder or lightning flash prior to resuming activities or returning outdoors or to the pool. If another episode of thunder or lightning occurs during that 30 minute waiting period, then

the 30 minute waiting period starts over. The weather watchers team will be in contact via 2- way radio with our coaching staff as well as have in person communication with officials about the progression of the 30 minute waiting period and when the "all clear" signal can be given.

**9. The following basic first aid measure should be taken when dealing with victims of a lightning strike:**

**\*Survey the scene for safety.**

**\*Call 911.**

**\*Lightning victims do not carry a "charge" and are safe to touch.**

**\*If necessary, move the victim(s) with care to a safer location.**

**\*Check airway, breathing, and circulation and begin CPR if necessary.**

**\*Evaluate and treat for hypothermia, shock, fractures, and/or burns.**

**FLASH-to-BANG METHOD (Can be used to approximate how far away a thunderstorm is)**

To use the flash-to-bang method, begin counting when sighting a lightning flash. Counting is stopped when the associated bang (thunder) is heard. Divide this count by five to determine the distance to the lightning flash (in miles). For example, a flash-to-bang count of 30 seconds equates to a distance of six miles. Lightning has been observed to strike as far away as 10 miles from the storm center.