

DEALING WITH INCLEMENT WEATHER

~ REVISION 9/9/2016 ~

The WPIAL is advising all schools of the following when inclement weather is a possibility:

1. It is recommended that principals, athletic directors, contest officials, and coaches meet prior to the contest regarding the possibility of inclement weather for all sports to insure that there are clear predetermined guidelines established to address any and all scenarios.
2. Do any and all things possible to insure the safety of the participants, fans and others. Please reference the "Lightning Safety" guidelines below.
3. All WPIAL section football games must be played in their entirety as they bear on post season qualification.
4. The NFHS sport specific rule books identify criteria regarding potential termination of contests and the requirements that identify when games are considered official. These guidelines must be followed. If the specific sport rule book does not specify termination guidelines, insofar as possible, all games should be played to conclusion.
5. It is a recommendation (**and it is only a recommendation**) of the WPIAL that all non-section football games postponed before the conclusion of the first half, be concluded at a later date.
6. It is recommended that non-section football games interrupted in the second half or games that are being played under the "mercy rule" be terminated with the existing score unless it is mutually decided that the game should be concluded at a later date.
7. Remember that if a non-section football game is not concluded, the existing score will stand. The National Federation Rule Book Rule 3, Article 3 states: **"Games interrupted because of events beyond the control of the responsible administrative authority shall be continued from the point of interruption, unless the teams agree to terminate the game with the existing score or there are conference, league or state associations' rules which apply."**

LIGHTNING or THUNDER SAFETY

These guidelines provide a default policy to those responsible or sharing duties for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of practices and contests based on the presence of lightning or thunder. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state high school activities association and the nearest office of the National Weather Service.

Proactive Planning

1. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during practices and contests.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safe areas.
3. It is also advisable, when available, to use technology such as lightning strike detection devices, or commercially available lightning strike mobile phone apps, that indicate a lightning strike has occurred a storm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for 30 minutes and take shelter immediately.
4. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
 - a. When thunder is heard, and/or a cloud to ground lightning bolt is seen, the thunder storm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for thirty minutes and take shelter immediately.
 - b. Thirty minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of 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 shall begin.
 - d. If seeking shelter the **ONLY ACCEPTABLE FORM** is a four-sided structure.
5. Review annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel.
6. Inform student athletes of the lightning policy at start of season.

For more detailed information, refer to the "Lightning and Thunder Safety" section contained in the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook.