



## **GUIDELINES FOR ADDRESSING THUNDERSTORMS & VISIBLE LIGHTNING**

*The following information should be viewed as guidelines to be considered when playing or training during periods of approaching thunderstorms or visible lightning.*

*These guidelines have been prepared with guidance and input from Todd Van Vliet (President) and Gerry Barstead, CRSP, CRM, NCSO (Safety Officer), Environmental Refuelling Systems, Inc., Edmonton, Alberta and have been developed in accordance with the accepted standards of work-related safety in relation to thunder/ lightning storms.*

1. Designate a chain of command. One person monitors an approaching storm and advises the person in charge (referee) who has the responsibility of evacuating the athletes. Should a Match Commissioner or Tournament Commissioner be appointed they should accept responsibility for monitoring the storm. If no such person is appointed the referee should delegate this role to the touch judge who is in position to watch the approaching storm. During a training session it would be prudent for the coach to appoint a responsible adult to perform this role.
2. Plan in advance the evacuation of athletes. During evacuation, the athletes should be directed to a location that offers protection from the storm by having at least three walls and a roof. Metal structures are not considered adequate protection because lightning can travel along the metal and strike people inside the structure. Avoid standing or sitting in vehicles under a single tree or a small group of trees, close to a large body of water, in open areas or close to Antenna Towers. Avoid using telephones including cellular telephones.
3. In the event of an approaching thunderstorm with visible lightning the person monitoring the approaching storm should utilize the “Flash/Bang” (F/B) technique to determine the proximity of the approaching storm.
4. The “Flash/Bang” technique means that for every count of three from the time the lightning bolt is seen to the time when the associated thunder is heard the lightning is approximately 1 km distant. A “Flash/Bang” count of 9 indicates that the storm is approximately 3 kilometres distant (approximately 2 miles). A “Flash/Bang” count of 15 indicates the storm is approximately 5 kilometres distant (approximately 3 miles).
5. When thunder is heard and a ‘Flash/Bang’ of 30 is calculated (representing approximately 10 kilometres) it is an indication that a thunderstorm is in the area and the person responsible for storm monitoring should be on alert.
6. If the “Flash/Bang” intensity increases to a level of 9 or approximately 3 kilometres the referee (or coach if it is at a training session) should stop all play and all participants should seek shelter within a building or inside a vehicle in a large group of trees or forest.

7. Once the thunderstorm passes over, the referee should wait until the "Flash/Bang" is 9 or greater before resuming play.
8. Thunderstorms have a tendency to reverse course and come back over an area that they have just passed. The person monitoring the storm should remain vigilant until the storm is out of sight or the "Flash/Bang" count is 30 or more.