

Lightning Safety for Organized Outdoor Events

Lightning is a frequent weather hazard impacting outdoor events in Utah.... Concerts, picnics and barbeques, etc., all these and other outdoor sports have been visited by lightning.

Education is the single most important means to achieve lightning safety. A lightning safety program should be implemented at every facility and by every event manager/organizer. The following steps are suggested:

1. A responsible person directly associated with the activity should be designated to monitor weather conditions. Local weather forecasts - from The Weather Channel, NOAA Weather Radio, or local TV stations - should be observed 24 hours prior to your events. An inexpensive portable weather radio is recommended for obtaining timely storm data.
2. Suspension and resumption of activities should be planned in advance. Understanding of SAFE shelters is essential. SAFE evacuation sites include:
 - a. Fully enclosed metal vehicles with windows up.
 - b. Substantial buildings.
 - c. The low ground. Seek cover in clumps of bushes.
3. UNSAFE SHELTER AREAS include all outdoor metal objects like flag poles, fences and gates, high mast light poles, metal bleachers, golf cars, machinery, etc. **AVOID** trees. **AVOID** water. **AVOID** open fields. **AVOID** the high ground.
4. Lightning's distance from you is easy to calculate: if you hear thunder, it and the associated lightning are within auditory range...about 6-8 miles away. The distance from Strike A to Strike B also can be 6-8 miles. A good lightning safety motto is: "If you can see it (lightning) flee it; if you can hear it (thunder), clear it."
5. Wait a minimum of 30 minutes from the last observed lightning or thunder before resuming activities.
6. If you feel your hair standing on end, and/or hear "crackling noises" - you are in lightning's electric field. If caught outside during close-in lightning, immediately remove metal objects (including baseball cap), place your feet together, duck your head, and crouch down low in baseball catcher's stance with hands on knees.
7. People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to handle. Apply first aid immediately if you are qualified to do so. Get emergency help promptly. If you need an ambulance, contact University Police Dispatch at 801-585-2677.