SEVERE WEATHER POLICIES

1. LIGHTNING POLICY

a. Lightning is an unpredictable and dangerous occurrence. All athletic teams holding practices and competitions outdoors are at risk during inclement weather. The UTD Athletic Training Staff has implemented a lightning safety policy to minimize the risk of injury to athletes, coaches, staff and fans. In accordance with the NCAA and American Southwest Conference, the Athletic Training Staff will monitor lightning using the “Hear-See” method and/or the Telvent MX/Vision Weather Sentry System.

b. General Policy – A member of the Athletic Training Staff will monitor inclement weather and make a decision to suspend activity in the event of lightning. In the absence of an Athletic Training Staff member, the head coach will have the ability to suspend activity (i.e. Golf, Cross-Country, and Tennis). Once the decision to suspend activity has been made, a UTD athletic administrator on site, coaching staff and officials will be notified. The decision to suspend activity will be based upon:

i. A lightning strike within the 12-mile radius of the UTD campus as alerted by the Telvent MX/Vision Weather Sentry System,

AND/OR

ii. Utilization of the “Hear-See” method. (Experts now suggest that if you “hear” thunder begin preparation for evacuation; if you “see” lightning, consider suspending activities and heading for your designated safer locations.)

1. As a minimum, it is recommended that by the time the monitor observes 30 seconds between seeing the lightning flash and hearing associated thunder, all individuals should have left the athletics site and reached a safer structure or location.1

c. Prior to Competition – A member of the athletic training staff will greet the officials, explain that we have a means of monitoring lightning, and offer to notify them during the game if there is imminent danger from lightning.

d. Announcement of Suspension of Activity – Once it has been determined there is danger of a lightning strike, the Athletic Training Staff member will notify the head coach and/or official, and the athletes will be summoned from the playing surface.
e. **Evacuation of the Playing Field** – Immediately following the announcement of the activity suspension, all athletes, coaches, officials, and support personnel are to evacuate to an enclosed grounded structure. Shelter should be sought in a safe structure. IF a suitable building is not available, a dry ditch may be used to crouch in. DO NOT LIE FLAT! MINIMIZE YOUR BODY’S SURFACE BY ASSUMING A CROUCHED POSITION WITH ONLY THE BALLS OF YOUR FEET ON THE GROUND. WRAP YOUR ARMS AROUND YOUR KNEES, LOWER YOUR HEAD AND WAIT FOR THE STORM TO PASS.

f. **AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS**
   i. **Baseball Practice and Games**
      1. Athletes and staff evacuate to the Activity Center
      2. Fans evacuate to the Activity Center or their vehicles
   ii. **Softball Practice and Games**
      1. Athletes and staff evacuate to the Activity Center
      2. Fans evacuate to the Activity Center or their vehicles
   iii. **Soccer Practice and Games**
      1. Athletes and staff evacuate to the Activity Center
      2. Fans evacuate to the Activity Center or their vehicles
   iv. **Tennis Practice and Games**
      1. Athletes and staff evacuate to the Activity Center
      2. Fans evacuate to the Activity Center or their vehicles
   v. **Golf Practice and Games**
      1. Athletes, staff and fans evacuate to the nearest shelter, clubhouse, or a short group of trees.
      2. GOLFERS SHOULD DROP THEIR CLUBS & REMOVE SHOES WITH METAL SPIKES. Individuals should not stand in groups or near a single tree. There should be 15 feet between individuals. IF possible seek shelter near a group of smaller trees.
   vi. **Cross-Country Practice and Meets**
      1. Athletes, staff, and fans evacuate to nearest grounded shelter, dry ditch, or small group of trees.

   g. **Additional Lightning Safety Tips**
      i. There should be no contact with metal objects (bleachers, fences, golf clubs, bats, etc.)
      ii. Single trees and standing in a group should be avoided.
      iii. If there is no other shelter, you may seek refuge in a hardtop vehicle. It is not the rubber tires that protect from lightning; it is the hardtop metal roof that dissipates the lightning around the vehicle. (NCAA, 2007)
      iv. The existence of blue skies and/or absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can strike 10 miles away from the rain shaft. (NCAA, 2007)
      v. DO NOT LIE FLAT ON THE GROUND.
      vi. Avoid using a landline telephone.
vii. Persons who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. You can provide care. Move the victim to a safe location to provide care.

viii. If in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick grove of small trees.

h. **Evacuation of the Stands and PA Announcement**: During a competition, once the official signals to suspend activity, a member of the Sports Information Staff will announce via the PA system the following message and direct them to the above areas:

   “May I have your attention, please? We have been notified of approaching inclement weather. Activity will cease until we have determined it is safe and the risk of severe weather is diminished. We advise you to seek enclosed shelter.”

i. **Resumption of Activity**: Activity may resume once a member of the Athletic Training Staff gives permission. The decision will be based on:

   i. Thirty minutes AFTER the last lightning strike or last sound of thunder. (If lightning is seen w/o hearing thunder, lightning may be out of range and therefore less likely to be a significant threat).

   AND / OR

   ii. An all clear alert from the Telvent MX/Vision Weather Sentry System,

j. **What if someone is struck by lightning**

Recommended Pre-hospital Care for Treating Lightning-Strike Victims:³

   i. Survey the scene (Safe for you? Victim findings – unconscious, fixed/dilated pupils, cold extremities, cardiopulmonary arrest)

   ii. Activate EAP.

   iii. Carefully move the victim to a safe area, if needed.

   iv. Evaluate and treat for apnea/asystole.

   v. Evaluate and treat for hypothermia and shock.

   vi. Evaluate and treat for fractures.

   vii. Evaluate and treat for burns.

   viii.
Athletic Training Staff monitors weather

Lightning strike

Imminent danger detected

Signal officials or coach to suspend activity
Announcement to fans; seek appropriate shelter
Evacuate players, coaches, officials and support staff
Evacuate fans

Athletic Training Staff monitors lightning

If safe, resume activity
If danger remains, suspend or cancel activity
2. **TORNADOES**

A tornado is a violent windstorm characterized by a twisting, funnel-shaped cone. It is originated from a thunderstorm/hurricane, and is produced as cool air overrides a layer of warm air, for the warm air to rise rapidly. Tornado season is normally March through August, although they can occur at any time of the year. They tend to occur most in the afternoons and evenings.

Tornadoes strike with incredible velocity, with speeds up to 300 miles per hour. Their destructive power is immense. Typically, a tornado will stay on the ground for no more than 20 minutes. However, one tornado can touch ground several times in different areas.

- **Tornado Watch** – a tornado watch means that conditions are favorable for a tornado to occur. Be aware/alert of the current weather situation in the area and do the following:
  - Review the actions that should take place should a tornado watch develop, or if a tornado funnel is sighted.
  - Ensure no physical restrictions exist that would prevent free movement to your nearest safe area (clear any blocked doors, aisles, etc.)
  - Continue normal activities, but be alert to the weather outside, and monitor the radio/television or watch the sky for worsening weather conditions.
  - DO NOT phone the UTD police or the campus operator for information. Keep the telephone lines clear for emergency messages.

- **Tornado Warning** – a tornado warning means that a tornado has been sighted. You should do the following:
  - Take cover!
    - Proceed to the nearest area/shelter
    - Because of possible electrical failures, use the stairs, not the elevators.
    - Avoid auditoriums and gymnasiums with large, poorly supported roofs.
  - In multi-story buildings, you should move to the basement or first floor. Inner hallways are usually safe areas. If possible, move to the ground level. If you are in a frame or sheet metal building and weather conditions permit, move to a brick or stone building for added protection.

**References:**