

To: All NMAA Member School AD's, Football Coaches and Football Officials

From: Dusty Young, Associate Director
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Subject: Football Lightning Policy

Date: September 12, 2016



In light of the typical New Mexico monsoon season, we have been asked by a number of officials to send out the lightning policy for the NMAA. Per the NMAA Handbook (Section 7.10.6), "*In the event of lightning, refer to the NFHS Lightning Disturbance Guidelines located in each sport specific NFHS Rule Book.*"

The following procedures will be put in place for handling contests lightning disturbances from the NFHS Rulebooks.

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

Proactive Planning for Schools

- 1) Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during events.
- 2) Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby shelters.
- 3) Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
 - a) When thunder is heard, or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for 30 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, reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
 - d) Hold periodic review for appropriate personnel.

NOTE: These lightning delay procedures are for all contests, varsity, sub-varsity and mid school.

In addition, below please find a link to the NMAA policy for lightning/threatening weather for supplemental information:

http://www.nmact.org/file/NMAA_Lightning.pdf

Per NFHS Rules, the officials assume authority of the contest 30 minutes prior to the scheduled game time. However, when it comes to lightning/weather, it needs to be a collaborative effort between the officials and game site administration from the time any players/coaches head out to the field through the end of the game. Officials do have the authority to stop the contest at any time once they assume control, but if site administration sees something officials may not or if they have a lightning detector, that information should be shared with the crew to get everyone to safety. At that time, the 30 minute wait can start. If lightning is detected prior to assuming authority, site administration should keep track of that count until the officiating crew can be informed and become part of the event management process.

Also, please note the following from the NMAA Handbook (Sections 7.9 and 7.10) regarding the status of the game once there has been a weather delay (I'm sending this information due to subsequent questions I received after sending the initial email):

Section 7.9 - GAMES/EVENTS POSTPONED

7.9.1 - Since contests are originally scheduled by mutual consent of the administrative head or legally designated school employee, it follows that rescheduled events must also be by mutual consent of the same authorities.

7.9.2 - The Director is contacted only in instances where schools cannot agree. Contests may be declared forfeited if not played within a reasonable time as determined by the Director.

7.9.3 - An event called for reason of inclement weather may not be declared forfeited if it can be established that the safety of the participants was at stake. Immediate notification of the other school and officials should follow and changes in games/schedules should be communicated to the NMAA and officials assigner.

7.9.4 - Rescheduled games/events are to be played under the same eligibility rules for participation as any regularly scheduled game. (Each participant must be eligible when the game is played.)

7.9.5 - Games or events where officials are not present are considered postponed unless otherwise determined by the Director.

7.9.6 - In the event of lightning, refer to the NFHS Lightning Disturbance Guidelines located in each sport specific NFHS Rule Book.

Section 7.10 GAMES/EVENTS INTERRUPTED

7.10.1 - The game officials are the only authoritative body that may interrupt a game or event. In sports where no officials oversee the event, the host school administrator shall determine the rules regarding interrupted games.

7.10.2 - In the event that a game must be interrupted because of conditions which make it impossible to continue play (i.e. lightning, darkness, power outage, etc.) the head official/referee shall declare it an official game if one complete half or more of the game has been played; based upon the NFHS definition of a regulation game. If less than one-half of the game has been played, and it is a district game/post-season game, the game must be rescheduled from the point of interruption/suspension of play. If less than one-half of the game has been played, and it is a non-district game, the participating schools must mutually agree to reschedule the game from the point of interruption/suspension of play or the game will be considered a non-game. Note: If one complete half or more of the game has been played in a post-season game, it will be left up to the discretion of the tournament director and/or the NMAA Executive Director to determine if the game is played to its entirety.

7.10.3 - If the contest is to be finished at a later date, both schools share equally in the expense of the visiting school.

7.10.4 - Only participants eligible at the interruption are eligible when the contest is resumed.

7.10.5 - Officials receive one additional round-trip mileage when working the remainder of the game/event at a later date, but receive only one officiating fee. If the same crew cannot be used to complete the game, both the original officiating crew and the crew assigned to complete the game will receive officiating fees. Both crews would receive mileage reimbursement.

7.10.6 - In the event of lightning, refer to the NFHS Lightning Disturbance Guidelines located in each sport specific NFHS Rule Book.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.