

Weather Emergency Emergency Action Plan

Lightning & Tornado's



GENERAL POLICY

This policy is designed to give employees as well as volunteer coaches of the City of Vandalia an overview of the appropriate course of action to take during weather emergencies. The procedures in this policy are meant to serve as guidelines. During an actual emergency, situations may arise that negate the logic behind one or more of these procedures. Therefore, it is imperative that each situation is examined in a calm manner, decisions made with factual information and communication maintained with the policy, facility staff and emergency resources.

- A timely warning is the best way to avoid confusion and injuries in the event of an emergency.
- All employees and volunteer coaches should keep abreast of potential weather emergencies and do not assume others are aware.
- All employees and volunteer coaches are responsible for assisting in the safety of their fellow employees, coaches, participants and spectators.
- Care should be taken never to induce panic, rather to encourage caution.

WHO'S IN CHARGE

The department head or highest ranking supervisor present will be responsible for taking charge during a weather emergency. Employees and volunteer coaches will observe directives and/or instructions issued by this individual. Volunteer coaches will be responsible for following action procedures during practice sessions when VPRD employees are not present.

LIGHTNING STORMS

Lightning is random and unpredictable. City of Vandalia employees and volunteer youth sport coaches must follow specific guidelines when the risk of lightning makes it necessary to suspend activities and clear the area. For the first time, Vandalia is using the Thor Guard Lightning Prediction System. This state of the art lightning predictor will sound **ONE 15- second** blast of a horn when signs of lightning are detected. If the horn sounds, activities must be suspended immediately. If you are within visibility of the system, which has been installed at the Sports Complex (unit on concession roof and also on pole between baseball fields #1 & #2) and Helke Park (unit on roof of restroom building) you will also see a strobe light flashing and remain flashing until safe conditions return. All coaches, participants and spectators must immediately evacuate the athletic venue and seek safe shelter. You may resume activities only after hearing **THREE 5- second** blasts of the horn, the strobe light will also stop flashing. Coaches are responsible for following the emergency action procedures in the absence of a VPRD employee, such as during practices.

- **Advanced warning of the hazard**
 1. An employee and/or volunteer coach shall be responsible to monitor weather conditions during athletic events (including practices). Local weather forecasts from the Weather Channel, NOAA Weather Radio or local TV stations should be observed prior to athletic events.

2. Be aware of National Weather Service issued thunderstorm “watches” and “warnings” as well as the signs of thunderstorms developing nearby. A “watch” means conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in an area; a “warning” means that severe weather has been reported in an area and for everyone to take proper precautions.

- **Locations of safe shelter**

1. While no place is absolutely safe from a lightning threat, some are safer than others. When activity has been suspended due to the Thor Guard Prediction System alert, participants must evacuate to one of the following suggested safe shelters:

- **Vehicle** – Fully enclosed metal vehicles such as cars, trucks and vans with windows rolled up provide good shelter from lightning. Avoid contact with metal or conducting surfaces outside or inside the car. It is not the rubber tires that makes a vehicle safe, but the hard metal roof which dissipates a lightning strike.
- **Vandalia Recreation Center** – Large enclosed structures tend to be much safer than smaller or open structures.
- **Park Maintenance Building** – *This location is an option only if a full time employee is on site and can open the building for use as a shelter location.*
- If you or anyone else feels their hair standing on end, and/or hear “crackling noises”, they are in lightning’s electric field. If caught outside during this time, 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 (do not lay flat on the ground)

- **Avoid being in or near the following areas and items:**

1. Open fields and high places
2. Isolated trees
3. Open air picnic shelters, including the concession stand area
4. Flagpoles and light poles
5. Bleachers (metal or wood; dugouts)
6. Metal fences
7. Golf carts
8. Electrical/electronic equipment
9. Under an umbrella

RESUMING ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES

When the Thor Guard sensor detects that danger has passed (a minimum of 10 minutes after the initial alarm) it will send the all-clear signal (THREE 5-second blasts of the horn and the strobe light will stop flashing). If activities cannot resume after a 45-minute delay, the activity will be officially postponed or cancelled.

- **First Aid Recommendations for Lightning Victims**

Most lightning victims can actually survive their encounter with lightning, especially with timely medical treatment. Follow these steps to try to save the life of the lightning victim:

1. Survey the scene for safety. The first tenet of emergency care is “make no more casualties”. If the area where the victim is located is a high risk area (open field area)

with a continuing thunderstorm, the rescuers may be placing themselves in significant danger.

2. Call 911 to provide directions and information about the likely number of victims.
3. Individuals struck by lightning do not carry a charge and it is safe to touch them to render medical treatment
4. If necessary, move the victim with care to a safer location.
5. Evaluate airway, breathing, and circulation, and begin CPR if necessary.

TORNADOES

Although not common, the possibility does exist for a tornado (or similar conditions) in this part of Ohio; as a result, the VPRD staff and volunteers should be prepared to communicate this information to our participants, and if necessary, evacuate to safety. The City of Vandalia has an outdoor weather warning system in place, the sirens that make up this weather warning system are located in strategic outdoor venues: (1) Vandalia Sports Complex (near the northern soccer restrooms), (2) Cassel Hills Golf Course (near the maintenance garage), (3) Lichtenfels Park on West Alkaline Springs Road. The sirens are designed to provide an audible warning when severe weather situations are present or as they develop and impact the Vandalia area. The warning sirens are a “call to action” for those in the path of severe weather to take cover or to implement other safety precautions immediately.

1. Upon the issuance of a “**Tornado Watch**” (conditions favorable for a tornado) by the National Weather Service or local television station, a VPRD employee or commissioner should inform participants and spectators of such conditions and make necessary arrangements to assure preparedness to assist in the event that a “warning” is issued. Personnel should stay tuned to local television stations and/or weather radio for updates on the weather conditions.
2. In the event of an issued “**Tornado Warning**” (a tornado has been sighted or detected by radar) or a sighting of a funnel cloud by a creditable source, City of Vandalia public safety personnel will activate the outdoor weather warning system. VPRD employees or volunteer coach (in practice situations) should initiate the suspension of all athletic activity immediately upon the activation of the siren. The siren will indicate to all coaches, participants and spectators to immediately evacuate the athletic venue and seek safe shelter (Vandalia Recreation Center locker rooms or Park Maintenance Building restrooms/locker rooms). All participants, spectators and staff should remain in the tornado safe spots until the “all clear” horn has been sounded (three (3) short blasts) by VPRD personnel.

CONCLUSION

The seemingly random nature of severe weather (thunderstorms, tornadoes) cannot guarantee the individual or group absolute protection from weather emergencies; however, being aware of and following proven safety guidelines can greatly reduce the risk of injury or death. The individual is ultimately responsible for his/her personal safety and has the right to take appropriate action when threatened by severe weather. Adults must take responsibility for the safety of children in their care during severe weather activity.

The spirit of this policy is to ensure, to the best of our ability, the safety of each participant, coach, parent and spectator. Any time this policy may not be “clear” as to the course of action to take in a severe weather situation, VPRD employees and volunteer coaches should yield to the course of action that will maximize the safety of all participants and staff.