SAL Lightning Strikes Guidelines

Date: November 2011

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1 Introduction

1.1 In statistical terms, lightning poses a greater threat to individuals than almost any other natural hazard in Australia, accounting for five to ten lives and well over 100 injuries annually. These figures are likely to increase in line with the growing proportion of people who are engaging in outdoor recreational activities.

2 Procedure

Access to Bureau of Meteorology

2.1 In the lead up to the game, it is recommended that a designated official monitor weather forecasts on the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website (http://www.bom.gov.au/).

No access to BOM

2.2 If access to BOM is not available on the day, the 30/30 rule is recommended.

2.3 The first part of the 30/30 rule is a guide to the **postponement** or **suspension** of games. During a thunderstorm, a 'flash-to-bang' count of 30 seconds indicates that the lightning is 10km away. This indicates a potential for significant risk and the plate umpire should suspend the game.

2.4 The second part of the 30/30 rule provides a guide to the **resumption** of games. It is recommended that a period of 30 minutes should elapse after the last sight of lightning or the sound of thunder before resuming the game.

2.5 **Note:** blue sky and lack of rainfall is not a reason to breach the 30 minimum return-to-activity rule.

Unsafe locations and situations

2.6 Avoid:

2.6.1 Open field

2.6.2 Close vicinity to the tallest structure (eg tree, light pole)

2.6.3 Small structures (eg rain/picnic shelters, tents, dugouts

2.6.4 Umbrellas, bats or other objects that increase an individual's height

2.7 Avoid the use of portable radios, mobile and landline telephones, fax machines, computers and other electrical equipment. If emergency calls are required, keep them brief.

3 Game responsibilities

3.1 The plate umpire is responsible for suspending games.

3.2 Once a game is suspended, the plate umpire hands responsibility to the Tournament Management Committee (TMC). The TMC consists of:

- Tournament Chief Umpire (TCU)

- SAL Technical Delegate
- Tournament Convenor

3.3 The TMC must ensure all participants convene to a safe area (eg club house, 'hard top' vehicle etc).

3.4 The TMC is responsible for notifying all team managers of the situation.

3.5 Team managers are responsible for notifying their own team personnel of the situation.

3.6 The TMC is responsible at all times for keeping team managers informed.

3.7 The TMC is responsible for deciding if and when the game will resume and will not do so unless 30 minutes has elapsed after the last sight of lightning or sound of thunder.

3.8 Once the game resumes, the TCU will hand over responsibility to the Plate Umpire for the game to recommence.

4 First aid

4.1 If some is struck by lightning, get medical attention as quickly as possible.

4.2 Ensure the rescuer is in no danger of being struck by lightning. If the patient is not breathing commence resuscitation immediately.

4.3 Check for burns in two places – the injured person may be burned, both where they were struck and where the electricity left their body. Being struck by lightning can also cause nervous system damage, broken bones, and loss of hearing or eyesight.

4.4 People struck by lightning carry no electrical charge and cannot shock other people.

5 References

Lightning Web Sites: www.noaa.gov search *lightning* and www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov

Makdissi M., Brukner, P, Medical Journal Australia 2002 177 (1): available at: http://www.mja.com.au *and then search for "Recommendations for lightning protection in sport"*

Australian Life Savers Journal SLSA (2003)