# SOUTHEAST ONTARIO SOCCER ASSOCIATION (SOSA)

**Canadian Soccer Association (CSA) POLICY JULY 16, 2008**

## Lightning Safety / Severe Weather Policy

The safety of players, coaches, management and spectators is the primary concern in any weather event that occurs during all matches sanctioned by the CSA. By understanding and following the information below, the safety of everyone shall be greatly increased.

Ultimately the referee has the final say over delaying or restarting a match due to weather. Waiting to stop or not wanting to start play may result in a serious injury or loss of life. Referees are expected to act responsibly when dealing with such events during matches they are controlling.

When lightning is detected, you can determine the distance of lightning in your area by counting the number of seconds between the flash and the first sound of the thunder and dividing by five (5). This will give you the distance in miles from your location.

Remember, if you are in a higher elevation, the lightning can come upon you much quicker and your reaction time is greatly hindered.

**30/30 RULE:** When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If this time is thirty (30) seconds or less, seek proper shelter. Wait thirty (30) minutes or more after hearing the last thunder before leaving the shelter. If you cannot see the lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good back up rule.

**Additional Information**
Please note the following recommendations from Environment Canada:

> "The existence of blue sky and absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can and does strike as far as ten (10) miles away from the rain shaft. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike. Many lightning casualties occur in the beginning as the storm approaches, because many people ignore initial precursors of high winds, some rainfall and cloud cover. Generally the lightning threat diminishes with time after the last sound of thunder, but may persist for more than thirty (30) minutes.
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> "Lightning can strike ahead of the parent cloud – take action even if the thunderstorm is not overhead. Be aware of how close lightning is occurring. The flash-to-bang method is the easiest and most convenient way to estimate how far away lightning is occurring. Thunder always accompanies lightning, even though its audible range can be diminished due to the background noise in the immediate environment and its distance from the observer.

> "Lightning awareness should be increased with the first flash of lightning or the first clap of thunder, no matter how far away. This activity must be treated as a wake-up call to all. The most important aspect to monitor is how far away the lightning is occurring, and how fast the storm is approaching relative to the distance of a safe shelter.
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> "Recognize that personal observation of lightning may not be sufficient. Additional weather information may be required to ensure consistency, accuracy and adequate advance warning."
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> *CSA Referees Committee July 2008*

When larger groups are involved, the time needed to properly evacuate an area increases. As time requirements change, the distance at which lightning is noted and considered a threat to move into the area must be increased. Extending the range used to determine the threat potential also increases the chance that a localized cell or thunderstorm may not reach the area giving the impression of a "false alarm". Know where the closest "safe structure or location" is to the field or playing area and know how long it takes to get to that safe structure or location.

Safe structure or location is defined as:

- Any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e., a building with plumbing and/or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure;
- Avoid using shower facilities for safe shelter and do not use the showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm;
- In the absence of a sturdy, frequently inhabited building, any vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled up windows can provide a measure of safety. A vehicle is certainly better than remaining outdoors. It is not the rubber tires that make a vehicle a safe shelter, but the hard metal roof which dissipates the lightning strike around the vehicle. Do not touch the sides of any vehicle!

If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize contact with the ground because lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike.

Minimize your body's surface area and the ground! Do not lie flat! If unable to reach safe shelter, stay away from the tallest trees or objects such as light poles or flag poles, metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the highest object in a field. Do not take shelter under a single tall tree.

Avoid using the telephone, except in emergency situations. People have been struck by

lightning while using a land line telephone. A cellular phone or portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land line phones, if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.

When considering resumption of any athletics activity, it is recommended that everyone should ideally wait at least thirty (30) minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field.

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is safe for the responder. If possible, an injured person should be moved to a safer location before starting CPR. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help quickly. Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.

For additional information the following web site is helpful:

**www.weatheroffice.gc.ca**