

Rancho Bernardo High School

Lightning-Safety Policy

While severe weather that produces lightning is relatively improbable in our climate, it is a significant weather related hazard to our student-athletes when present. Lightning causes more casualties annually in the US than any other storm related phenomena, except floods. The National Athletic Trainer's Association recommends a proactive approach to lightning safety including the implementation of a lightning-safety policy. This policy should set the standard for: identifying presence of a lightning hazard and when to suspend activities; shelter locations for all venues; how to track local weather; establishing a chain of command; and return to field activity protocol.

When it appears that severe storms are imminent and lightning is a possibility, the athletic training staff, coaches, pool lifeguard staff, or others designated by a school administrator will track the storm's development and movement. This should be done utilizing online resources such as weatherchannel.com, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) weather radio, or visually. It is recommended that outdoor participation be suspended and all participants should seek shelter when lightning is detected within six miles of our location. This can be determined by a thirty second (or less) "flash-to-bang" interval.

Whom ever is tracking the storm will immediately notify the RBHS athletic training staff and begin clearing their area once imminent threat of lighting is present as determined by the thirty second "flash-to-bang" rule. The athletic training staff will: notify the administrator monitoring extension 4000 for the purpose of sounding an alarm over campus PA; attempt to safely contact each practice/game site, including pool and advise to seek shelter; attempt to radio campus security and custodial staff if administrator has not already done so. If an event is utilizing a PA system, all participants and spectators should be warned and advised to seek shelter over the public address system.

Teams will be directed to report to their designated safe structure. A safe structure is any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e., a building with established plumbing and or electrical wiring that can act to electrically ground the structure. When an event is delayed for lightning, an announcement will be made to spectators regarding the reason for the delay as well as suggestions for their safety. Spectators should either go inside a safe structure or at least get into automobiles which have a solid metal roof (not convertible) and roll up the windows.

Designated Safe Structures

Stadium events – Gym locker rooms

Gymnasium – Stay in gymnasium

Pool – Team room on deck and gym locker rooms/Spectators
to gymnasium

Varsity Baseball/Softball – enclosed storage area of dug-outs, not in bench area

Lower Level Baseball/Softball – Gymnasium Locker room

Tennis Courts – Gymnasium

Track field events – Gymnasium or locker rooms (which ever is closer)

Athletic field between Baseball diamond and Tennis courts – Gymnasium

Bernardo Heights MS fields – BHMS gymnasium (if open) or RBHS gymnasium

Cross Country – Permanent bathroom buildings at Black Mountain Park or other facility
as directed by coach

Lacrosse Country – Gymnasium locker rooms

Once activity has been suspended, no further participation shall be advised until the storm has moved on and no further thunder or lightning has been observed for a period of thirty minutes. At this time an “all clear” advisory will be spread similarly to how the warning message was disseminated, and teams may exit their safe structures. At this time, any decision to resume practice or contest will be at the discretion of the coaches and game officials. For activities on the pool deck, the senior lifeguard on duty will determine when activities can proceed.

Rancho Bernardo High School Athletics wishes to thank the following organizations for making their research and data available:

National Athletic Trainer’s Association
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association
American Meteorological Society