

Kea'au High School
Athletic Training
Lightning Safety Policy

During the storm season (June to October) in Hawaii, severe storms are common. When lightning storms develop, danger to athletes participating outdoors increases significantly. This outlines specific policies to minimize the risk of being injured or killed during an electrical storm.

1. Chain of Command
 - During practices: The Athletic Trainer, if present, or the head coach will determine if the risk of lightning injuries increase beyond safety.
 - Immediately before games: The Athletic Director and Athletic Trainer will determine if the game can be completed safely.
 - During games: The game officials, with input from the Athletic Trainer, will determine game site safety.
2. One coach on each team will be designated before the season as the Weather Watcher. High winds, darkening clouds, distant lightning or thunder may signal an impending storm. If these conditions develop, the Weather Watcher must notify the head coach and/or the Athletic Trainer for action.
3. The Athletic Trainer will monitor online and televised weather forecasts on a daily basis to determine the chances of approaching storms. In collaboration with school administration, and constant monitoring by the Weather Watcher, a decision to postpone, or end an event or practice will occur possibly before the storm arrives.
4. Before the season, the Athletic Trainer and head coach will determine safe structures in which participants can wait out a passing storm. The safest structures are fully enclosed and contain wiring and plumbing. The best alternative is a vehicle with a metal roof and fully closed windows. Participants should not go near wiring, metal objects, or landline telephones while in the structure.
5. Kea'au High School will use the flash-to-bang method to determine the time to postpone an event or practice. If any thunder is heard, the playing field should be cleared. If the time between the visual flash and the sound of thunder is equal to or less than thirty second, the activity must end and athletes moved to a safe structure.
6. Safe return is determined by the 30-minute rule. Thirty minutes after the last thunder is heard may be considered safe to return to the playing field. Blue skies or lack of rain are not determining factors in the decision to return to the playing area. Each time thunder is heard, the 30-minute clock is reset.

If a lightning storm develops without warning over the playing area, every participant should seek the lowest elevation as quickly as possible. If hair begins to stand on-end, and the sound of bacon sizzling or cloth tearing is sensed, a lightning strike is imminent. Victims should assume the lightning-safe defense position by crouching on the balls of the feet as low as possible with feet together and hands covering the ears. This position reduces the height of the person, decreases the amount of contact with the ground, and covers the most common orifices electrical current enters the body.

Some of the policies stated above may seem overly cautious but they are the result of scientific study and proven fact. Safety and injury prevention remain top priorities of the interscholastic athletics and athletic training program. Keeping participants safe during electrical storms is a reasonable expectation.