

OHIO NORTH STATE REFEREE COMMITTEE POLICY ON SEVERE WEATHER

Nothing is more important than the safety of the players! Soccer games can always be resumed or replayed. Northern Ohio often has a very active season of severe weather and referees **MUST** be aware of the below requirements and **MUST** enforce them! Referees cannot be swayed by leagues, teams, coaches or players that want to get the game in when there is severe weather.

On May 13, 2014, the Ohio North State Referee Committee adopted the following severe weather policy:

Since the average distance between successive lightning flashes is approximately two to three miles, **ANYTIME** that lightning can be seen or thunder heard, the risk is already present. Weather can be monitored using the following methods:

Recognition

Monitor Weather Patterns

Be aware of potential thunderstorms by monitoring local weather forecasts the day before and morning of the competition, and by scanning the sky for signs of potential thunderstorm activity.

National Weather Service

Weather can also be monitored using small, portable weather radios from the NWS and many cell phones have apps to accomplish this. The NWS uses a system of severe storm watches and warnings. A watch indicates conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in an area; a warning indicates severe weather has been reported in an area, and everyone should take proper precautions. Any thunderstorm poses a risk of injury or death even if it does not meet the criteria for severe weather. Therefore, anytime thunderstorms are in the forecast (even if it is only a 20 percent chance), event officials shall be at a heightened level of awareness to the potential danger of lightning.

Evacuation

If lightning is imminent or a thunderstorm is approaching, all personnel, athletes and spectators shall evacuate to available safe structures or shelters.

- (1) No place outside is safe near thunderstorms
- (2) The best shelter is a large, fully enclosed, substantially constructed building. A vehicle with a solid metal roof and metal sides is a reasonable second choice.
- (3) If there is no proper shelter, **avoid** the most dangerous locations: Higher elevations; wide open areas, including fields; tall isolated objects, such as trees, poles, or light posts; unprotected open buildings; rain shelters; bus stops; metal fences and metal bleachers

Management

THIRTY-MINUTE RULE

Competition shall be suspended **once lightning has been recognized or thunder is heard.** It is required to wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning is witnessed or thunder is heard prior to resuming competition. Given the average rates of thunderstorm travel, the storm should move 10-12 miles away from the area. This significantly reduces the risk of local lightning flashes. Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count shall reset the clock, and another count shall begin. "Heat lightning" is still lightning and the thirty minute rule applies.

Multiple field complexes

When there are multiple fields at a complex, if the officials at one field see lightning or hear thunder and suspend the game then ALL fields at the complex MUST also suspend their game! Games will not resume until all officials on all fields agree that thirty minutes has passed since the last lightning flash was seen or thunder heard!

ENFORCEMENT

All officials are required to enforce this policy AND all officials are required to report any violations of this policy. Violations should be reported to the Assignor, District Referee Administrator for the applicable district, the State Youth Referee Administrator or the State Referee Administrator. Contact information for these individuals may be found on www.ohnrefs.org. Failure to enforce this policy or report violations will subject the offender to disciplinary action which may include fines and suspension or revocation of their referee license. Assignors are required to forward such reports to the applicable DRA, SYRA or SRA.

Application

This policy shall apply to all competitions in Ohio North that are sanctioned by USSoccer or their affiliates including, but not limited to, USASA, USYSA, SAY, AYSO, Club Soccer, OSAN or OYSAN.

The above policy is the MINIMUM required by any person officiating a game in Ohio North. Competition authorities may adopt stricter policies than the guidelines set forth here. Referees are responsible to understand and enforce any such policies. Competition authorities may also choose to suspend a game based on possible severe weather even if the signs are not present.

REMEMBER THAT IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO ERR ON THE SIDE OF SAFETY!