

# Dangerous Weather Policy (Thunder and Lightning)



When it comes to personal safety, organisations can provide education, policies, workplace safety equipment and training, but individuals must also contribute to their own safety by taking some responsibility for their own welfare.

Predicting hazardous circumstances in respect to thunder and lightning events is difficult due to the unpredictability of our climate. The purpose of this policy is to provide:

1. Facts about lightning.
2. A guide to anticipating the approach of a thunderstorm.
3. A guide to safety measures before and during thunderstorms.
4. A warning when thunderstorms are forecast.
5. A thunder/lightning safety guidelines for members.

Each year in Australia, lightning accounts for over one hundred injuries and as high as ten deaths. About 25% of those killed by lightning are playing outdoor sport. A large percentage of lightning strike victims survive but many of these suffer from severe life-long injury and disability. When thunderstorms threaten, we must not let the desire to complete our golf game hinder our judgment when our safety may be in jeopardy.

## Lightning Facts

- All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous.
- Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain, and
- Any time thunder is heard, the thunderstorm is close enough to pose an immediate lightning threat to your location.
- When thunderstorms are in the area but not overhead, the lightning threat can still exist even if it is sunny overhead, not raining, or when clear sky is visible.
- Many lightning casualties occur before the thunderstorm rains have moved into the area. This is often due to people not seeking shelter soon enough.
- Large numbers of casualties occur after the rain dissipates. This can be due to people being in too much of a hurry to go back outside and resume activities.

## Anticipating a Thunderstorm: FLASH TO BANG RECKONING

- Keep a look out for thunder clouds, they can develop in as little as 15 minutes.
- If thunder is accompanied by intra-cloud/cloud to ground lightning you are already at high risk.
- **FLASH TO BANG RECKONING**
  - Count the seconds between hearing thunder and seeing the associated flash of lightning
  - Every 3 seconds equates to a distance of 1 kilometre

- If the time is less than 30 seconds between flash to bang (10 kilometres) you should, if safe to do so, seek a safe location.

## Safety Guide during Thunderstorms

If outside, with no time to reach a safe building or vehicle, follow these rules:

- Do not stand underneath a natural lightning rod such as a tall, isolated tree.
- Avoid projecting above the surrounding landscape as you would do if you were standing on a hilltop, in an open field.
- Get away from open water.
- Get away from tractors and other metal farm equipment.
- Get off of, and away from, golf carts and put down golf clubs and umbrellas.
  - Many umbrellas have metal stays that can act as lightning rods.
- Stay away from wire fences, metal pipes, and other metallic paths which could carry lightning to you from some distance away.
- Avoid standing in small isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas.
- In a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees. In open areas, go to a low place such as a ravine or a valley.
- If you feel your hair stand on end - indicating that lightning is about to strike - drop to your knees and bend forward putting your hands on your knees. Do not lie flat on the ground.

## Thunderstorms: Warning to Members

The Club Professional (or his delegate) will peruse the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) forecast daily prior to the first tee off time to ascertain if thunderstorms are predicted. If a thunder warning is in place then all players shall be alerted to the possibility of extreme weather conditions before play commences. The Club Professional or his delegate shall display a copy of this policy and safety guidelines prominently in the Pro shop.

Once informed of the warning, and having been provided with the thunderstorm policy and safety guidelines, players are able to make an informed decision with respect to playing their round of golf on the day.

If, during the round, a thunderstorm occurs there will be no warning device sounded. Players are to follow the safety guidelines provided to them prior to the round.

If any player has made his or her own decision not to complete their round if he or she rationally believes it is not safe to do so, then their score shall be recorded as NO SCORE APPROVED.

If a player elects to suspend his or her round due to thunderstorms he or she shall mark their ball and seek shelter in accordance with the safety guidelines. Once 30 minutes has elapsed between last sound of thunder and lightning sighted players may resume their round.

A copy of the thunderstorm safety guideline shall be posted as a separate document on the Blackwood Golf Club website. Members are urged to download the document and place a printed version in their golf bag.

## Thunderstorm Safety Guide

- How close is thunderstorm?
  - Count flash to bang. 3 seconds is 1 kilometre. If less than 30 seconds, seek safe location.

- Near Clubhouse?
  - Mark ball. Leave golf clubs and umbrellas.
  - Walk with partners at least 4 metres apart, NOT in close group.
  - Walk to clubhouse and get inside.
- Too far from Clubhouse?
  - Mark ball.
  - Get away from water (puddles, dams).
  - Do not stand together in a group. Separate at least 4 metres from partners.
  - Do not stand under isolated tree.
  - Do not stand near golf clubs.
  - Do not stand on high point.
  - Abandon umbrella.
  - Do not stand near fence or anything constructed of or containing metal.
  - Seek shelter in a low area under thick growth of trees.
- Lightning Striking in immediate area
  - Feel hair stand on end – lightning about to strike.
  - Drop to knees, bend forward and grab knees. DO NOT lie flat.
- 30 minute safety rule
  - You will be safe if 30 minutes have passed since last thunder heard/lightning seen.
  - The clock starts again if thunder is heard or lightning observed.