

POLICY

Lightning And Thunder

2026



This Policy was adopted by the IDNA Board on 25 February 2026

LIGHTNING AND THUNDER SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR NETBALL

1 INTRODUCTION

This policy document is specifically worded for Lightning and Thunder for use by Netball Illawarra. The content is based on the content of the Netball NSW Policy for Adverse Weather Conditions, as well as other similar policy documents for other sports.

In Australia, lightning accounts for 5 to 10 deaths and well over 100 injuries annually. Statistics show that almost 25% of people killed by lightning are playing sport when they have been struck by lightning.

When thunderstorms threaten, coaches must not let the desire to start or complete a game or a coaching session hinder their judgement when their safety and that of their players, umpires and spectators is in jeopardy.

The sound of thunder should serve as an immediate warning of the potential for a lightning strike. If an individual can see lightning and/or hear thunder, then they are already at risk of being struck by lightning.

The National Lightning Safety Institute in the US recommends the saying: "If you can see it, flee it; if you can hear it, clear it".

2 LIGHTNING FACTS

- ⚡ All thunderstorms produce lightning and therefore should be considered as being potentially dangerous
- ⚡ Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as fifteen kilometres away from any rainfall.
- ⚡ Any time thunder is heard, the thunderstorm is close enough to pose an immediate lightning threat to your location.
- ⚡ Even though a thunderstorm is not overhead, the lightning threat can still exist, even when overhead it is sunny, or when clear sky is visible.
- ⚡ Many casualties from lightning occur before a thunderstorm has moved into an area. This is often due to people not seeking shelter soon enough.
- ⚡ Similarly, casualties do regularly occur after a thunderstorm has passed. This in many cases is attributed to people being in too much of a hurry to get on with their activities.

3 THE 30 – 30 RULE

The risk potential for a lightning strike injury is identified by what is commonly known as the 30-30 Rule. This rule identifies that the closer lightning is to where you are, the greater the risk of a lightning striking the ground where you are training or playing. The 30-30 Rule has 2 parts.

3.a. Part 1 – Lightning Approaching

Part 1 is for when lightning is approaching the training or competition venue. It is identified as the “**flash-bang count**”, which is time between first sighting of lightning and the first sound of thunder. By the time the flash-bang count approaches 30 seconds, all individuals should already be inside a safe shelter.

There is a potential problem in that with a thunderstorm there may not be visible lightning. This does not mean that it is OK to continue to play or train. In the Illawarra area, the proximity of the escarpment and the coastline, it is recommended that if lightning is seen, or thunder is heard, then, training or games should be immediately stopped, and everyone moved to a safe place.

Such action is not optional. If one team or game stops then everyone must stop.

3.b. Part 2 – Lightning Leaving

Part 2 is for when the lightning and thunder has finished around the training or competition venue and the storm is moving away from the training or competition area.

No one should venture out on to the playing or training grounds until at least 30 minutes after the last sound (thunder) or observation of lightning and ensure conditions are completely safe before leaving shelter to resume activities. Each time lightning is observed, or thunder is heard, the 30-minute clock should be re-started.

4 ATTENDING CARNIVALS AT OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

Where teams compete in carnivals or gala days hosted by another Association, the chances are that the host Association will rely on the Netball NSW Adverse Weather Policy. And they may, or may not, enforce that policy. In the interests of player safety, it is recommended that, should a thunderstorm be in the vicinity of the venue, that the competing teams from clubs affiliated with Netball Illawarra, or Netball Illawarra teams, apply the Netball Illawarra Lightning Policy and withdraw from the carnival or gala day.

IDNA LIGHTNING POLICY

Whenever there is lightning or thunder in the vicinity of competition or training grounds being used by Netball Illawarra, or any of its members, or any outdoor activity authorised by, or under the control of, Netball Illawarra, or an affiliated club, the 30/30 Rule relating to lightning shall be applied by those responsible for the organisation of the activity.

If the time difference between a lightning strike and the associated thunder is 30 seconds, or less, all persons associated with the activity as players, officials, umpires, or spectators shall immediately leave the grounds and seek shelter that is appropriate for protection from a lightning strike.

In the Illawarra area, if there is thunder, with no lightning, or lightning with no thunder, then requirements specified in the 2nd paragraph shall be applied.

The activity that has been suspended shall not be restarted until there has been at least 30 minutes elapse since there has been any visual or audible evidence of a lightning or thunder.