

# Lightning Policy

Policy Name: Lightning Policy

Policy Number: V3

Document Type: Policy

Effective Date: December 2013

Last Reviewed: June 2023

Next Review: June 2026

Applicable Legislation:

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required by the organisation. The review will ensure it reflects both the community expectations and all legal requirements.



## Overview

Volleyball Western Australia's (VWA) Lightning Policy has been introduced to reduce the risk of weather related injury to players, coaches, & officials involved in VWA events or activities.

## Background

"Lightning is one of the most dangerous and frequently encountered weather hazards in Australia. It is estimated there are five (5) to ten (10) deaths and over one hundred (100) severe injuries caused by lightning every year."<sup>1</sup>

The effects of being struck by lightning ranges from minor to life-threatening; fatalities usually being caused by cardiac arrest. DRSABCD should be undertaken immediately if anyone is struck by lightning: there is no threat of electrocution through bodily contact with someone who has been struck by lightning.

The 30/30 rule should be used to assess danger:

1. Clear the playing field immediately if the flash-to-bang gap is less than 30 seconds;
2. Seek shelter in a large permanent structure or enclosed metal vehicle;
3. If there is no shelter, crouch down with feet together preferably 20m away from solitary tall objects; and
4. Only return to the playing field once 30 minutes has elapsed since the last lightning strike.

Each event or competition will be declared safe to play or not by a VWA Representative on a case-by-case basis using the Lightning Procedure.

## Policy Application

1. This policy applies to all VWA members and all other people or organisations which by agreement or otherwise, are bound to comply with this policy.
2. This policy applies to behaviour and practices occurring during the course of VWA business, activities, competitions and events.

## Responsibilities

VWA'S role and contribution in making this policy work is to:

1. Prepare a policy statement as part of VWA risk management procedure.
2. Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that everyone in the organisation knows:
  - What this policy is
  - Their responsibilities

This will be achieved by:

- including a copy of the Policy in Policy and Procedures Manual;
- distributing the Policy to all Associations and Clubs;
- ensuring all VWA and Club / Association personnel are educated with the policy;
- including a copy of the policy on the VWA website;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.australiawidefirstaid.com.au/lightning-strikes/>

- notifying participants in all VWA activities and / or events that they will be required to comply with this policy.
- 3. Ensure that first aid equipment and trained personnel are available at competitions / events state coaching, training and competition sessions.
- 4. Provide a pre-game checklist to all VWA Tournament Directors and support staff involved in the game day care of players, which includes contact details for the local general practices, local hospital emergency departments and ambulance services.
- 5. Review this policy and update as required every 12 months.

The Clubs / Associations and VWA member's roles and contributions are to:

1. Comply with this policy and ensure information is made available.
2. Ensure all significant personnel are familiar with the policy and required procedures at each level of the VWA Network.
3. Collaborate with VWA staff to implement best practice.
4. Report any areas of concern to VWA within a timely manner.

### **Policy Statement**

VWA will take all breaches of the policy seriously and will ensure they are dealt with promptly, sensitively and confidentially. Disciplinary action may be taken against a person who is found in breach of this policy, in accordance with the Complaints Management Procedure.

# Lightning Procedure

## 1. Identify the risk

If lightning is observed or thunder is heard, count the time between the lightning (flash) and the thunder (bang). If the time delay is less than thirty (30) seconds then the strike was closer than 10km and the playing area should be cleared immediately.

## 2. Seek shelter

If in doubt, seek shelter as soon as lightning is observed or thunder is heard. All players are responsible for identifying the risk and must trust the judgement of anyone who identifies the risk.

- Seek shelter in a large building or fully-enclosed metal vehicle - avoid small structures, fabric tents and isolated or small groups of trees.
- If in the open away from shelter, crouch down (singly), preferably in a hollow, with feet together and remove metal objects from head and body. Do not lie down but avoid being the highest object in the vicinity.
- Move immediately if hair stands on end or you hear buzzing from nearby rocks, fences etc. At night, a blue glow may show if an object is about to be struck (St Elmo's fire).
- Don't handle long or metallic objects such as umbrellas or shade structures in the open.
- Don't touch or move close to metal structures, wire fences, goal posts or light towers.
- Don't ride bicycles or drive in open vehicles.
- If inside a fully-enclosed metal-bodied vehicle park away from trees, power lines etc.
- Stay inside vehicles or caravans but do not touch or lean on metal body components.
- When inside a building AVOID use of the telephone, taking a shower, washing your hands, doing dishes, or any contact with conductive surfaces with exposure to the outside such as metal door or window frames, electrical wiring, telephone wiring, cable TV wiring, plumbing, etc.

## 3. First Aid

- If someone is struck by lightning apply first aid techniques immediately.
- Where necessary, apply immediate heart massage and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation (CPR) to lightning victims until medical help arrives.

## 4. Suspension of play

- Play should be suspended immediately when someone has observed a delay of less than 30 seconds.
- If one game at a venue suspends play due to a lightning observation, all games at that venue are deemed to have been suspended at that exact moment also.

## 5. Resumption of play

- Only return to the playing field after at least 30 minutes after the last lightning or thunder has been observed. Be conservative.

- If a particular competition or event has a policy/ rule for game cancellation, then that will be implemented if the games are not continued.