

# Orlando Babe Ruth Inclement Weather Policy Updated: September 22, 2016



Lightning is the most dangerous and frequently encountered weather hazard that most people experience each year. It is the second most frequent killer in the United States with nearly 100 deaths and 500 injuries each year. Living in Central Florida, the frequency of lightning strikes is even greater. The potential risk of injury and the consequences of an accident are too severe to ignore. With this in mind, ACYS has adopted the following policy in regards to lightning safety.

## 1.0 Trotters Park and the Thorguard System

OBR is continually striving to provide a safe and risk-free environment for its participants, spectators, coaches and staff. To this end, all activities at Trotters will be monitored for lightning by the Thorguard Lightning Prediction and Warning System. The Thorguard system is a lightning "predictor" which measures and analyzes the electrostatic field in the atmosphere to predict the risk of a possible lightning strike. This differs from lightning "detection" systems which require lightning to strike the ground before a warning can be issued. This is of utmost importance considering a majority of lightning deaths and injuries occur from the first lightning strike or from the rear of a storm that has already passed.

The Thorguard system (sensor/light and horn assembly) is located at the entrance of Trotters Park Soccer Fields. In the event atmospheric conditions are present for a potential lightning strike, a 15-second blast will sound signaling that all fields should be cleared ("Red Alert"). It is imperative that athletes and spectators seek shelter during this time by departing the fields and entering their vehicles. Standing to the side of the field, under a tree, or waiting on the bleachers is **not acceptable**--everyone should use the safety of their vehicles or, if none are available, the shelter at the Concession Stand. In addition to the horn blast, the system has a yellow strobe light that will illuminate during the "Red Alert" period. Once Thorguard no longer detects the threat of a lightning strike, the horn will sound three five-second blasts indicating that it is safe to return to activity ("All Clear").

It is important to remember that common sense should be used when conditions appear unsafe and the Thorguard system has not sounded; both when deciding to cease activity and deciding to return to play.

## 2.0 Off-Site Events

If a team is practicing or has a game away from Trotters Park the decision to seek shelter will be made by **any** of the following:

- Executive Board Member
- OBR Field Manager
- OBR Team Manager (or coach if the manager is not present)
- Umpire

This decision will be based according to the guidelines set by the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL). The guidelines recommend that athletic participation be discontinued when lightning has been detected within six miles. The decision to return to play will be made 30 minutes after the last dangerous lightning bolt has passed. Lightning proximity will be measured using the flash-to-bang method in the absence of a lightning detector system at the venue.

### 3.0 Flash-to-Bang Method

To use the flash-to-bang method, begin counting when a lightning flash is sighted. Counting is stopped when the associated bang (thunder) is heard. Divide this number by five (lightning travels 1 mile/5 seconds) to determine the distance to the lightning flash. For example, a flash-to-bang count of 30 seconds means the lightning is six miles away.

### 4.0 Shelter

A safe shelter is any substantial, frequently inhabited building. The building should have four solid walls (not a dug out), electrical and telephone wiring, as well as plumbing, all of which aid in a grounding structure. The secondary choice for a safer location is a fully enclosed vehicle with a metal roof and windows completely closed. It is imperative not to touch any part of the metal framework of the vehicle.

If you are unable to reach a safe shelter, stay away from any tall objects (tree, light poles or flag poles), metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), standing pools of water, and open fields. Minimize your body's surface area, and minimize contact with the ground. **DO NOT LIE FLAT!** Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of your feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head.

### 5.0 Management of a Strike Victim

1. Survey the scene for safety.
2. Activate/contact local EMS.
3. Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to touch.
4. If necessary, move the victim with care to a safer location.
5. Evaluate airway, breathing, and circulation, and begin CPR if necessary.
6. Evaluate and treat for hypothermia, shock, fractures, and/or burns.

### 6.0 Important

All individuals have the right to leave an athletic site in order to seek a safe structure if the person feels in danger of impending lightning activity, without fear of repercussion or penalty from anyone. Furthermore, any coach, player, or spectator who remains at an athletic venue **after the decision to suspend play** has been made by those appropriate individuals as noted in section 2.0 assumes full liability for any health related issue that may arise due to the inclement weather.