



OKLAHOMA SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION

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TO: Spirit Coaches
FROM: Brian Lester, Assistant
RE: Cheerleading Competition
DATE: July 2025

In the link you will find:

EXTREME HEAT POLICY
EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN
LIGHTNING INFORMATION
SPORTSMANSHIP

Coaches you will receive your spirit rule book at the summer clinic or via mail. Additional resources are available online, including concussion and head injury protocols, the Extreme Heat Policy, sportsmanship guidelines, and a sample Emergency Action Plan. To stay informed, coaches are encouraged to review these resources and access the Cheer Manual on the OSSAA.com SPIRIT page, which provides detailed information on competitions and sideline cheer guidelines. A careful review of these materials is crucial for a safe and successful season.

Entry form due August 15, 2025 for Competitive Cheer

Entry form due October 1, 2025 for Game Day Cheer

Please visit with your Athletic Administrator to make sure the form is turned in on time.

The Rules meeting will be posted to the Spirit page by August 13, must be completed by September 1.

The OSSAA's vision for sportsmanship is built on expectations. Expectations that the school community—administrators, teachers, coaches, students, and patrons strive for displaying only positive behavior and good sportsmanship in everything they do at all interscholastic contests. As educators we have the unique opportunity to teach the value of discipline, dignity, integrity, fairness and respect to young people each day.

We encourage all school personnel to take advantage of the opportunity and make a lasting difference.

Regional Competition: September 20, 2025—Sites TBA

State Cheer Competition: September 27, 2025- Union High School (UMAC)

Game Day Regional: November 8, 2025—Sites TBS

Game Day State Competition: November 14-15, 2025—Union High School (UMAC)

SPORTS MEDICINE

Handbook



**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS**

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ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Lightning Safety

By Kevin D. Walter, M.D., FAAP

- Education and prevention are the keys to lightning safety.
- Practice and competitions should be immediately suspended as soon as lightning is seen or thunder is heard.
- All athletes and spectators should seek safe shelter during severe weather.
- Play should not resume for at least 30 minutes after the last lightning strike or thunderclap.

SIGNIFICANCE

Lightning is one of the most consistent causes of weather-related deaths and injury in the U.S. According to the National Severe Storms Laboratory, there are approximately 100 lightning-related deaths and over 1000 injuries yearly.

BACKGROUND

Lightning-related injuries mainly occur between May and September. Most lightning-related casualties happen between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m., with the majority of those occurring between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Therefore, the risk of lightning-related injury appears to be highest during some of the most active periods for outdoor athletic activities. The average distance between successive lightning flashes is about two to three miles, which means that **risk is present WHENEVER lightning can be seen or thunder can be heard.**

Game administrators, officials and the sports medicine staff can be aware of adverse weather by following local forecasts and by monitoring the National Weather Service (NWS). The NWS issues storm watches and warnings during times of severe weather. A watch means that the conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop, while a warning indicates severe weather has been reported and appropriate precautions should be taken. It must be remembered that any thunderstorm poses a risk of injury, even if not deemed "severe" by the NWS.

MANAGEMENT

As soon as lightning is seen or thunder is heard, practice and competition should be suspended immediately. A **Lightning Safety Plan** should be a component of the Emergency Action Plan (see Emergency Action Plan chapter) and should be in place for every sport and facility. This plan should contain instructions for participants and spectators, designation of safe shelters, and designation of warning and all clear signals. This plan must be disseminated to the proper personnel and reviewed and practiced on a routine basis.

There should also be a systematic plan for monitoring weather. The weather forecast should be closely followed throughout the day prior to any practice or competition. A weather radio is helpful in providing current information. Weather can also be monitored over the Internet or through the use of lightning strike monitors. However, such

technology should never be a substitute for directly hearing or seeing dangerous weather. There should also be one person designated to monitor threatening weather and make decisions regarding participation. However, if anyone hears thunder or sees a lightning strike, appropriate action should begin.



If lightning is imminent or a thunderstorm is approaching, all personnel, athletes and spectators should be evacuated to safe structures. A list of the closest safe structures should be announced and displayed on placards at all venues. The ideal safe structure is a fully enclosed building with plumbing, telephone and electrical service, which aid in grounding the structure. A fully enclosed automobile or school bus with all of the windows rolled up is a reasonable shelter, although care must be taken to avoid contact with any metal inside the vehicle. The hard metal frame and roof, not the rubber tires, dissipate the current around the vehicle. Golf carts and convertible cars are not safe shelters. Dugouts and golf shelters are not safe shelters and are not grounded for the effects of lightning.

Avoid the use of shower facilities for shelter and do not use showers or plumbing during a thunderstorm as the electrical current from lightning can enter the building through plumbing connections. It is also unsafe to stand near utilities or use a landline telephone during a thunderstorm because of the risk of the current traveling through the lines. Cellular and cordless telephones are considered to be safe.

If a suitable safe shelter is not available, it is best to avoid tall objects (trees, light poles, etc) that allow lightning an easy path to the ground. It is important to avoid being the tallest object. In an open field, people should crouch with their legs together, the weight on the balls of their feet, arms wrapped around their knees, and head down with their ears covered. The person should minimize contact with the ground and should NOT lie flat.

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electric charge. Therefore, it is safe to perform CPR, if needed. Ideally, injured persons are moved into a safe shelter. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help.

RETURN TO PLAYING FIELD

The NFHS recommends following the 30-minute rule when making return-to-play decisions. After the last flash of lightning is witnessed or the last thunderclap is heard, it is recommended to wait at least 30 minutes before resuming practice or competition. Given the average rate of thunderstorm travel, the storm should move 10 to 12 miles away from the area, reducing the risk of local lightning strike. **Any subsequent lightning strike or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count should reset the clock and another count should begin.**

PREVENTION

In order to prevent lightning-related injuries, it is important to formulate and implement a Lightning Safety Plan and provide adequate education for all athletes and personnel. The plan needs to be reviewed and practiced periodically. The plan also must include a systematic approach for monitoring local weather activity and recognizing signs of nearby danger (thunder and lightning strikes). Criteria for suspension and resumption of activity should be clear. Appropriate safe shelters for each athletic venue should be clearly identified.

References

- Bennett BL. A model lightning safety policy for athletics. *Journal of Athletic Training* 1997;32:251-253.
- Cooper MA, et al. Lightning injuries. In: Auerbach PS, ed. *Management of Wilderness and Environmental Emergencies*. 5th ed. C.V. Mosby, 2007:68-108.
- Holle R, Lopez R. Lightning-impacts and safety. *WMO Bulletin* 1998;47:148-155.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. Guideline 1d: Lightning safety. 2010-11 Sports Medicine Handbook (21st edition).

Resources

www.lightningsafety.com
www.weather.com
www.weather.gov

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

SPORT: _____

YEAR: _____

1. FIRST TO ARRIVE ON THE SCENE PROVIDES FIRST AID.
2. SEND A COACH, MANAGER, OR UNINJURED ATHLETE TO NOTIFY THE ATHLETIC TRAINER (ATC) AND GET THE AED (IF NOT ON-SITE).
3. IF THE ATC CAN NOT BE LOCATED, THE HEAD COACH WILL BECOME THE LEADER.

LEADER: _____

- Will be in charge of the emergency situation and will instruct all others on the emergency team

LEADER'S ASSISTANT: _____

- Will assist the leader in the evaluation of the injured athlete

PHONE CALLER: _____

- Will go to the nearest phone and activate the EMS
- Will inform the dispatcher of:
 - The nature of the injury and age of the athlete
 - The location of the athlete and directions to the site
 - Will not hang up until the dispatcher advises him/her to do so

NEAREST PHONE: _____

AMBULANCE ENTRANCE: _____

PERSON TO MEET THE EMS: _____

- Will contact any necessary staff to assure access for the ambulance
- Will meet the ambulance at the designated entrance and lead them to the injured athlete

PERSON TO ACCOMPANY ATHLETE TO HOSPITAL: _____

- Will ride with the athlete in the ambulance in the event the parents cannot be located
- Will take the athlete's emergency info to the hospital

- * It is the certified athletic trainer or coach's responsibility to inform the administrator of the incident
- * It is the certified athletic trainer or coach's responsibility to inform the athlete's parents of the injury immediately.
- * It is the certified athletic trainer's responsibility to document the circumstances surrounding the activity and all actions taken.
- * Emergency medical info for each athlete is to accompany the team at all times.

EMS (Fire, Police, Ambulance): 911
Athletic Department:

Any High School:
Athletic Training Room:

ATC:

Site contact:

Nearest Hospital:

EXTREME HEAT POLICY

XLVIII. EXTREME HEAT

The OSSAA recognizes that heat related illness is the leading cause of preventable death in high school students participating in activities. The Board adopted the following policies:

Acclimatization Period: Whenever students are participating in an environment in which the temperature cannot be controlled there should be acclimatization period. The acclimatization period is defined as the first 14 days of participation beginning with the first date of practice in that sport or activity, or the first date a participant begins practice, whichever is later. Any speed, strength, or conditioning programs shall not be considered a part of the acclimatization period. All students participating in athletics or activities, including those who arrive to preseason practice after the first day of practice, are required to follow the guidelines of the first days of the acclimatization period.

All athletic coaches and marching band directors are required to view *A Guide to Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention* at www.nfhslearn.com, annually. A certificate of completion shall be kept on file for each coach or marching band director at the member school.

FOOTBALL (Mandates)

- a. Preseason practice shall be limited to 2 ½ hours per session with a minimum of one hour between practice sessions. No more than 5 hours of practice per 24-hour period will be allowed. There will be no physical activity during the one-hour rest period. Any time a coach is present during football practice, the time will count toward the maximum 5 hours, with the exception of strength training.
- b. If a practice session is interrupted by inclement weather or heat restrictions, and it is required the session be divided for the good of the student-athlete's welfare as long as the total practice time does not exceed 2 ½ hours.
- c. When multiple practices are conducted in the same day, it is required that either practice not exceed 2½ hours in length and students not participate in more than five total hours of practice activities, including walk-through sessions. Warm-up, stretching, cool down and conditioning activities are included as part of the practice time. Practices should be separated by at least one hour, where there is no physical activity between the end of the first practice and the beginning of the second practice.
- d. Immediately prior to any practice, coaches are required to use a smart-phone APP, or other mechanism or program to get heat index, such as CoachSmart or the OSHA APP. There are also programs available on the Internet, such as AccuWeather, or Weather.com. These programs are free and can be used on any smart-phone, tablet, or computer. A chart outlining recommendations for making concessions for extreme heat is available on the OSSAA website. Schools must develop their own form to record the heat index each practice session.
- e. All practices must be held under the supervision of a coach employed by the school.
- f. Practices must always be conducted with an open water policy.
- g. Cooling stations shall be made available for the athletes (buckets of cool water, wet towels, sponges, etc.)
- h. Each program shall have a heat related emergency plan on hand at all times.

Guidelines for outdoor activities:

- a. Athletic Coaches or marching band directors should use a smart-phone APP, or other mechanism or program to get heat index, such as CoachSmart or the OSHA APP. There are also programs available on the Internet, such as AccuWeather, or Weather.com. These programs are free and can be used on any smart-phone, tablet, or computer. A chart outlining recommendations for making concessions for extreme heat is available on the OSSAA website. Schools must develop their own form to record the heat index each practice session.
- b. All practices should be held under the supervision of a coach, director, or sponsor employed by the school.
- c. Practices should always be conducted with an open water policy.
- d. Each program should have a heat related emergency plan on hand at all times.
- e. Preseason practice should be avoided if possible between the hours of 12 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- f. Parents and students should be educated on the importance of hydration during extreme heat conditions.
- g. Cooling stations should be made available when possible (buckets of cool water, wet towels, sponges, etc.)
- h. Equipment should be removed for conditioning.

SPORTSMANSHIP

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As educators we have the unique opportunity to teach the value of discipline, dignity, integrity, fairness and respect to young people each day.

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