

# Riverstone Schofields Junior Soccer Football Club



## Policy Lightning Policy

Effective Date 15 January 2007

The Riverstone Schofields Junior Soccer Football Club (the Club) considers the safety of its players, coaches, managers, officials, parents/guardians and spectators a high priority and as such have adopted the Soccer NSW Policy on lightning. This policy was developed due to weather conditions experienced in Australia, together with events on the South Coast when a cricketer was killed, and has been based on information primarily supplied by the Centre of Sports Medicine Research and Education and the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology.

Whilst lightning may be fascinating to watch, it is also extremely dangerous and underrated. During the past 30 years, based on documented cases, lightning has killed an average of 73 people per year in the United States. In Australia, there has been an increase in the number of casualties resulting from outdoor sport and recreational activities. On average, in Australia, 10 people a year die from lightning strikes. Statistics show that around 25% of people killed by lightning are playing sports such as golf, cricket or hockey.

Thunderstorms are most likely to develop on warm summer days and will go through various stages of growth, development and dissipation. During the thunderstorm, each flash of 'cloud to ground' lightning is potentially lethal. Lightning can travel 80km before it strikes something. If a person is in the path of that lightning discharge, it could prove deadly as the current associated with the visible flash travels along the ground. Although some victims are directly struck by the main lightning stroke, many victims are hit as the current moves in, and along the ground. The ground emits charges that shoot up to meet the leading strikes and the high voltage gradients cause currents to flow in concentrated channels on the surface or within the soil. It is therefore evident that the potential exists for a large number of people to be struck by lightning as they leave themselves vulnerable due to inadequate protective action.

Contrary to popular belief, lightning does not always strike tall objects – it can strike anywhere and can strike repeatedly. Metal objects do not attract lightning, although they may channel it if the strike is already a few metres away. There is clearly a need for all clubs and associations to implement an action plan, and adopt all precautionary methods available, to prevent any casualties.

Should thunderstorms be prevalent on match day, the '30-30' rule is to be used in order to determine whether a game should be suspended (to include delaying the commencement of the game) and when it is safe to resume play (to be determined by the Referee).

When lightning is sighted, count the time until thunder is heard. If that time is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is within 10km and is dangerous. As most experts believe that the 'safe' distance is no less than 10km, all people at risk should be seeking, or already inside safe shelters. This is the time at which matches should be suspended.

This rule is one of the most practical techniques for estimating the distance to lightning activity and is based on the fact that light travels faster than sound. As sound travels at a speed of around 1km every 3 seconds, the time that elapses between the flash of lightning and clap of thunder can be divided by 3 to give a measure, in kilometres, of how far away the storm is.

There is not a place absolutely safe from the lightning threat, however some places are safer than others and, where practicable, people should be moved to a safe structure as soon as possible. The best option is a large building with electric and telephone wiring and plumbing to provide a safe pathway for the current to the ground. Once inside, stay away from corded telephones, electrical appliances, lighting fixtures, radios or microphones and electric sockets and plumbing. Mobile or cordless telephones are a safe option if the person and antenna are located within a safe structure. Do not watch lightning from open windows or doorways. Inner rooms are preferable.

A solid building or a hard top (metal bodied) vehicle (including buses) that guides the lightning current around the passengers, is an alternative. Shelter should NEVER be sought under a small group (or single) of trees, in an open field or in small open structures such as rain/picnic shelters. People should stay away from metal poles, fences, clothes lines etc and should not use umbrellas or mobile telephones. Metal is not to be touched.

No lightning safety plan or policy will provide 100% guaranteed total safety, but every effort can be made to ensure that all preventative steps are taken.

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### **Summary of Procedures**

- ⚽ Monitor the weather for possible thunder storm activity (both the day before and day of the match).
- ⚽ If thunderstorms occur use the '30-30' rule (see below) to determine the distance of the storm and take appropriate action to suspend play if the thunderstorm is less than 10km away.
- ⚽ Play can only resume when the '30-30' rule has been satisfied and approved by the referee.
- ⚽ Ensure that all persons present are relocated to the club house or other safe shelter (change rooms etc)
- ⚽ Should a person be struck by lightning ensure immediate action is taken

### **30-30 Rule**

- ⚽ Take appropriate shelter when you count 30 seconds or fewer between lightning and thunder
- ⚽ Remain sheltered for 30 minutes after the last thunder