



City of Aurora • Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department  
**Recreation Division Lightning Policy**

1. Monitor: The Site Supervisor is the designated *Weather Watcher* for their facility. At the beginning of their shift, Site Supervisors should be aware of, and notify their staff of, weather forecasts that may impact operations.

In case of bad weather or the forecast of bad weather, the Site Supervisor will:

- a. Monitor the weather using the *Spark Lightning Alert* on the WeatherBug app on their mobile device.
  - b. Monitor the app every 10-15 minutes, more if necessary.
  - c. All staff should visually check for lightning, listen for thunder and watch for other threats.
2. Notify: Notify facility staff and patrons that storms are approaching whenever:
    - a. Lightning is detected within 20 miles of the facility.
    - b. A severe thunderstorm watch is issued for the facility or storms are detected within 20 miles.
    - c. A tornado watch is issued for the facility.
3. Lightning: When lightning is detected within **10 miles of the facility** as indicated by the *Spark Lightning Alert* on the WeatherBug app, or if thunder is heard, the Site Supervisor will immediately:
    - a. Notify facility staff that outdoor activities are suspended.
    - b. Using a PA system and/or bull horn, announce to guests that all outdoor activities will be suspended and advise all patrons and staff to move to shelter locations (indoors or in an enclosed vehicle).
      - i. At sites without a PA system, the Supervisor should utilize a city vehicle or personal vehicle to drive-around and make this announcement. Do NOT use a golf cart.
    - c. Site Supervisor will make this announcement TWO TIMES, then shelter themselves immediately.
      - i. Any equipment on deck or in the field should be left as is; do not collect or put things away.
    - d. Once sheltered, the Site Supervisor will:
      - i. Notify the Superintendent via a cell phone that the site has been evacuated/activity suspended.
      - ii. Continue to monitor lightning strikes on the WeatherBug app.
      - iii. Once lightning is detected within 10 miles of the facility, all outdoor activities must be suspended for no less than 30 minutes from the *latest* lightning strike.
    - e. All Clear: Once 30 minutes have passed without lightning or thunder, notify staff and patrons that it is all clear.

- i. After the all-clear notice, Site Supervisor will determine if play will continue, cancel, postpone or reschedule based on time, facility and/or field conditions. Staff will assist with communicating the Site Supervisor's decision to patrons.

#### Example notification:

"Your attention please, your attention please. Due to lightning in the area we ask that everyone please exit the facility and go to their vehicles. We will be on a 30 minute delay on a clock that resets every time lightning is detected. We ask that you please clear the facility now. Go to your vehicles now. We will notify you when we are set to resume. Thank you for your cooperation."

#### Acceptable Shelter Locations in Lightning and Thunderstorms.

1. Closed, hard-top vehicles.
2. Buildings with four walls in a room or area away from windows; in addition, a location on the lowest level possible is best.

#### Unacceptable Shelter Locations:

1. Picnic shelters, dugouts, and all other structures without four (or more) enclosed walls.
2. Garages or similar building with large doors that are open during the storm; these facilities are acceptable only if all doors are closed.
3. Under or near trees, fences, light poles or any other tall structure.
4. Near or in water, including pool decks or showers.

#### Additional Requirements for Site Supervisors

Site Supervisors are responsible for checking their facility's PA system, or bull horn, **at the first of each month** to ensure proper working conditions. Immediately report any issues to the Division Manager. Keep extra batteries in the designated bull horn area for replacing, and replenish surplus batteries, as needed.

#### Additional Considerations for Evacuation Time

Some facilities may require additional time for evacuation once severe weather has been identified in the area. The following factors should be considered when calculating necessary warning and evacuation times or distances:

1. Distance from the farthest point at the facility to acceptable shelter.
2. Amount of time required to notify all patrons and staff at the facility.
3. Number of patrons and staff on site and nature of activity (e.g. open swim, softball tournament, etc.).

#### Indoor Pools

The City of Aurora will not evacuate indoor pools for lightning or thunderstorms.

As noted by the International Life Saving Foundation in their Lifesaving Position Statement – LPS 16: There has been a great deal of debate over whether indoor swimming pools should be evacuated. However, there have been no recorded deaths arising from properly grounded indoor pools and it maybe that evacuating an indoor pool may increase the risk of a lightning strike as patrons may venture outside or go to the showers where metal pipes may conduct the electricity from a strike to the building. [Source: Aquatics International, Aquasalt, November/December 2008 "When lightning strikes – Should you close your indoor pool when lightning approaches".]