



125 Sports Street, Unit 2,
Moncton, N.B.
E1E 4W9
Phone: 506-382-7529
Fax: 506-382-5621
exec@soccernb.org
www.soccernb.org

GUIDELINES TO REFEREES, COACHES, PLAYERS - BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS

FIFA

FIFA Laws of the Game have limited guidance to referees on dealing with bad weather conditions. Law 5 – The Referee states:

Powers and Duties:

- ***To stop, suspend or terminate the match because of outside interference of any kind***

In addition, Decision 1 of the International F.A. Board with regards to Law 5 – The Referee states:

A Referee (or where applicable, an assistant referee or fourth official) is not held liable for:

- any kind of injury suffered by a player, official or spectator
- any damage to property of any kind
- any other loss suffered by any individual, club, company, association or other body, which is due or which may be due to any decision which he may take under the terms of the Laws of the Game or in respect of the normal procedures required to hold, play and control a match.

This may include:

- ***a decision that the condition of the field of play or its surrounds or that the weather conditions are such as to allow or not to allow a match to take place....***

CANADIAN SOCCER ASSOCIATION

Additional guidelines have been established by the **Canadian Soccer Association**:

When considering whether a game should be stopped due to bad weather (e.g. storm, lightning, snow, etc.), a referee must remember that the **number one priority is the safety of the players**. The referee should immediately stop play if the players' safety is in any way jeopardized due to bad weather. Other conditions which would also warrant a stoppage of play include:

- unplayable ball (e.g. caked in mud or snow, or floating in rain puddles making normal movement of the ball impossible or significantly altering the size of the ball),
- frozen or dangerously slippery field conditions, and
- disappearance of line markings.

In all the above cases the stoppage of play should initially be a temporary one order to determine whether the conditions themselves are temporary (e.g. short-term weather conditions) and/or whether steps can be taken to rectify the situation (e.g. remarking of lines to make them visible to all concerned or removal of puddles etc.). If the conditions are not temporary or cannot be overcome then the referee should abandon the game.

SOCCER NEW BRUNSWICK





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Soccer New Brunswick offers the following guidelines in addition to those issued by FIFA and the CSA:

Lightning Safety / Severe Weather Information

The safety of players, coaches, management and spectators is the primary concern in any weather event that occurs during all matches within Soccer NB's jurisdiction. The following information has been thoroughly researched and is provided to allow you to make the most educated decision when determining to stop or restart a game for lightning or severe weather. The following recommendations and precautions come from the National Severe Storms Laboratory (*Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, Vol. 80, No. 10, pp. 2035-2041*), *National Lightning Safety Institute, Lightning Safety Group and NCAA*) and Environment Canada.

Lightning Safety

Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect all athletic events. Environment Canada estimates that in Canada 6-7 fatalities and 60-70 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from strikes every year. While the probability of being struck by lightning is extremely low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and the proper safety precautions are not followed. Prevention and education are the keys to lightning safety and should begin before the start of any athletics event by the officials and team.

Severe Weather

Lightning flashes occur in Canada about 2.7 million times a year, including about once every three seconds during the summer months. This is based on observations collected during the past five years from the Canadian Lightning Detection Network. Lightning is most frequent between June and August. The worst time of day is the late afternoon and early evening when the majority of SNB matches are played. It will be to your advantage to learn what signs to look for when dealing with such weather.

Role of Officials

By understanding and following the information below, the safety of everyone shall be greatly increased. Ultimately, **as the referee, YOU HAVE THE FINAL SAY over delaying or restarting a game due to weather.** Waiting to stop play or not waiting to start play may result in a serious injury or loss of life. Act responsibly when dealing with such events during your games.

Be alert for Environment Canada weather warnings announced on radio or television, especially warnings of severe thunderstorms which can produce lightning, rain, hail, strong winds, and even tornadoes.

Keep an eye on the sky. Dark, heavy clouds in the afternoon of a warm spring or summer day can signal an approaching thunderstorm. Take precautions even if the thunderstorm is not directly overhead. Lightning may strike several kilometres away from the storm. If you see lightning or hear thunder, you should take shelter immediately.

Lightning strokes carry up to 100 million volts of electricity and leap from cloud to cloud, or cloud to ground and vice versa. Thunder may have a sharp crackling





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sound when lightning is close by, compared to a rumbling noise produced by more distant strokes.

When a lightning detector is unavailable, you can determine the distance of lightning in your area by counting the number of seconds between the flash and the first sound of the thunder. Each second represents about 300 metres. If you can count less than 30 seconds between the lightning strike and the thunder, this means that the storm is less than 10 km away and there is an 80% chance the next strike will happen within that 10 km. If you count less than 30 seconds, take shelter, preferably in a building or all-metal automobile or in a low-lying area, Remember, if you are in a higher elevation, the lightning can come upon you much quicker and your reaction time is greatly hindered.

Note that lightning may strike several kilometres away from the parent cloud. Precautions should be taken even if the thunderstorm is not directly overhead.

30-30 Rule:

- **Take appropriate shelter when you can count 30 seconds or less between lightning and thunder;**
- **Remain sheltered for 30 minutes after the last thunder.**

If caught outdoors:

- **Keep a safe distance** from tall objects, such as trees, hilltops, and telephone poles.
- **Stay away from objects that conduct electricity**, such as metal goal posts, metal fences, holding an umbrella. You are safe inside a car, but you may receive a shock if you step outside.
- **If caught in a level field far from shelter** and you feel your hair stand on end, lightning may be about to hit you. Kneel on the ground immediately, with feet together, placing your hands on your knees and bending forward. Don't lie flat.
- **If you are in a group in open space**, spread out keeping people several yards apart.
- **Wait about 30 minutes after the last thunder clap to resume outdoor activities.**

Note 1: Persons who have been struck by lightning receive an electrical shock but do not carry an electrical charge and can be safely handled. Victims may be suffering from burns or shock and should receive medical attention immediately. **CALL FOR IMMEDIATE MEDICAL HELP!** If breathing has stopped, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation should be administered. If breathing and pulse are absent, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation is required.

Note 2: Lightning may strike without severe or bad weather conditions being in effect.

For Further Information





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The links listed below are for your edification. It is highly suggested that you visit some of these sights to learn more about the dangers of thunderstorms, severe weather and lightning if you travel in areas that have different weather patterns than in your home area.

Educational Links

http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/lightning/index_e.html - Environment Canada, Lightning Activity –Link to National Lightning Detection Network

<http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/edu/ltg/> - Q & A about Lightning

<http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/edu/tornado/> - Q & A about Tornadoes

<http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/edu/storm/> - Q & A about Thunderstorms

<http://www.lightningsafety.com> - National Lightning Safety Institute homepage

<http://www.lightningstorm.com/> - Vaisala Lightning Thunderstorm homepage

Real-Time Weather Links

http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/canada_e.html - Environment Canada, Current Weather Conditions

<http://www.theweathernetwork.com> - The Weather Network homepage

