

**Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation
Events and Venues
Lightning Safety Plan for Outdoor Venues**

Purpose

This Lightning Safety Plan establishes procedures for responding to lightning and thunderstorm activity during outdoor events held on Parks and Recreation Department property. The purpose of this plan is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of patrons, participants, vendors, and event staff through proactive monitoring and timely response actions.

Policy Statement

All event organizers are required to comply with the Department's lightning safety procedures. The event organizer is responsible for implementing this plan, monitoring weather conditions, and taking appropriate action to suspend activities and direct patrons to safe shelter when necessary. The Parks and Recreation Department reserves the right to suspend or cancel event activities if conditions pose a safety risk.

Definitions

Lightning Detection Application: A mobile or web-based application capable of identifying lightning strike proximity and tracking storm activity (e.g., WeatherBug or similar tools).

Monitoring Radius: A defined distance used within a lightning detection application to track approaching lightning activity. For the purposes of this plan, a 10-mile radius shall be used to monitor lightning conditions.

Safe Shelter: A fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing, or a hard-topped motor vehicle with windows closed. Permanent restroom facilities qualify as safe shelter.

Unsafe Shelter: Open-air or temporary structures that do not provide adequate protection from lightning, including tents, picnic shelters, pavilions, and under trees.

Event Organizer: The individual or organization responsible for planning, coordinating, and managing the event, including ensuring compliance with all Department policies and safety procedures.

Event Staff: Individuals working or volunteering at the event, including security personnel, vendors, and support staff, who assist with operations and emergency procedures.

Suspension of Activities: The immediate halt of all event operations, including performances, vendor sales, and participant activities, due to unsafe conditions.

Before the Event

Weather Monitoring and Safety Preparation

If thunderstorms are forecast, the event organizer shall review this Lightning Safety Plan with all event staff, volunteers, vendors, and security personnel prior to the start of the event.

The event organizer shall designate a responsible individual to monitor weather conditions using a lightning detection application when available.

All event personnel shall be informed of the chain of command and procedures for suspending activities and evacuating the venue.

Event Communication Plan

If thunderstorms are forecast, the event organizer shall be prepared to notify patrons of delays or weather-related impacts using available communication methods, including public address systems, social media, and event staff or volunteers.

If a delay in opening occurs due to lightning or thunderstorms, patrons shall be directed to seek shelter in their motor vehicles until conditions improve.

During the Event

Weather Monitoring

The event organizer shall continuously monitor weather conditions using reliable weather and lightning detection tools. When available, a lightning detection application shall be used with a monitoring radius of 10 miles to provide advance notice of approaching lightning. Storm direction, speed, and severity shall be considered when determining appropriate safety actions.

Lightning Response Actions

At the first observation of lightning or the sound of thunder, the event organizer shall immediately suspend all event activities.

The event organizer shall initiate evacuation procedures.

Event staff, volunteers, and security personnel shall assist in directing patrons to appropriate shelter.

Patrons shall be directed to seek shelter in motor vehicles or permanent restroom facilities if vehicles are not available. Picnic shelters, tents, and temporary structures are not considered safe during lightning events.

Public Address Announcement

The following announcement may be used when suspending activities:

“Attention guests: Inclement weather, including lightning, is currently in the vicinity. For everyone’s safety, the event has been temporarily suspended. Please evacuate the venue in a calm and orderly manner. Seek shelter in your motor vehicles. If you do not have access to a vehicle, proceed to the nearest permanent restroom facility. Picnic shelters and tents are not safe during a storm. Updates will be provided via the public address system or event social media.”

Resumption of Activities

The event organizer shall continue monitoring weather conditions throughout any delay period.

When using a lightning detection application capable of identifying strike proximity, event activities may resume only after:

- A minimum of 30 minutes has passed, and
- No lightning strikes have been detected within a 10-mile radius of the venue

If a lightning detection application or monitoring tool is not available, event activities may resume only after a minimum of 30 minutes has passed since the last audible thunder.

Any additional lightning strike detected within the monitoring radius or any audible thunder shall reset the 30-minute waiting period.

The event organizer is responsible for determining when conditions are safe and for communicating the decision to resume activities to patrons, vendors, and event staff.

After the Event

The event organizer should evaluate the effectiveness of the Lightning Safety Plan and its implementation to identify opportunities for improvement in future events.

Responsibility

The event organizer is responsible for implementing this plan, including monitoring weather conditions, suspending activities, directing patrons to safe shelter, and communicating safety instructions.

The Parks and Recreation Department retains the authority to suspend or cancel event activities if weather conditions pose a safety risk.

Lightning Safety Quick Reference Guide

Outdoor Events – Parks and Recreation Department

Monitor Conditions

- Use a reliable weather source or lightning detection application (e.g., WeatherBug)
- When available, monitor lightning within a **10-mile radius**
- Assign a staff member responsible for weather monitoring at all times

When to Suspend Activities

- **Immediately suspend all activities at the first sign of lightning or sound of thunder**
- Do not wait for lightning to be directly overhead
- Notify staff, vendors, and attendees
- Begin evacuation procedures

Where to Seek Shelter

Direct all patrons to safe shelter:

- Fully enclosed buildings, or
- Hard-topped vehicles with windows closed

If vehicles are not available, use permanent restroom facilities

Do NOT use the following as shelter:

- Tents
- Picnic shelters or pavilions
- Open structures
- Under trees

During Suspension

- Continue monitoring weather conditions
- Keep staff positioned to guide attendees
- Provide updates using PA system, social media, or staff communication

When Activities May Resume

Activities may resume only when:

- **At least 30 minutes have passed, and**
- **No lightning has been detected within a 10-mile radius, or**
- **No thunder has been heard for at least 30 minutes**

Important:

- Any new lightning strike or thunder **resets the 30-minute waiting period**

Responsibility

- The event organizer is responsible for monitoring conditions and enforcing this policy
- All staff and vendors must follow directions during a weather-related suspension
- The Department may suspend or cancel activities if conditions are unsafe