

Westchester Dolphins Swim Team

Thunderstorm and Lightning Emergency Action Plan

Every year, lightning strikes and kills people on or near bodies of water. Summer is the peak season for outdoor and water-related activities, and is when most lightning deaths and injuries occur.

Summertime storms can pop up quickly and may move in erratic patterns. Along with hazards like strong wind and heavy rain, summer storms can bring dangerous lightning. According to the National Lightning Safety Institute (NLSI), **lightning strikes are random and unpredictable**, and being prepared is the best defense for staying safe. **Vulnerable locations include the indoor and outdoor pools, diving boards, lifeguard stands, and nearby outdoor recreational facilities.** While every state has reported lightning-related fatalities, Texas is included in the states with the highest numbers reported, due to our proximity to the storm-prone Gulf of Mexico.

Our team follows the industry standard in response to lightning and thunderstorms, adhering to policies set forth by the American Red Cross, The United States Lifesaving Association, the National Lightning Safety Institute, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the National Weather Service.

Remember: Lightning's behavior is random and unpredictable.

When you are near or in a pool, you are connected to more surface area than you realize. There are water pipes running underground, electric lines powering the pump, gas lines and telephone lines running underground and near the pool. A lightning strike anywhere in this grid could induce shocks elsewhere—especially, the swimming pool.

The Westchester Dolphins Swim Team follows NLSI swimming pool safety procedures:

1. Our coaches and Reps are designated as weather safety lookouts. They may also utilize WeatherBug, The Weather Channel, or other media sites in order to monitor the weather.
2. When thunder and/or lightning are first noticed, pool activities will be immediately suspended and all people must evacuate the pool and clear the deck areas. **Pool activities will be suspended for thirty (30) minutes from the time the first thunder is heard or first lightning is sighted.**
 - a. The Flash-To-Bang (F-B) method can be used determine a storm's rough distance and speed. This technique measures the time from seeing lightning to hearing associated thunder. For each five seconds from F-B, lightning is one mile away. *A F-B of 30 seconds or less indicates high risk!*
3. **Pool activities will continue to be suspended until thirty minutes after the last thunder is heard.** Lightning can strike from a very far distance, many miles away! *We will not take a chance with our children's lives when it comes to lightning or storms.*

"If you can see it, flee it; if you can hear it, clear it."

References

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association: <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/>

American Red Cross Lightning/Disaster: <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/thunderstorm>

NCAA Lightning Safety: <http://www.ncaa.org/health-and-safety/lighting-safety>

United States Lifesaving Association: <http://www.usla.org/?page=Lightning>

National Lightning Safety Institute: http://www.lightningsafety.com/nlsi_pls/swimming_pools.html