



PROCEDURE: LIGHTNING & SAFETY GUIDELINES

(3 March 2019)

Preamble

1. The College seeks to take serious and reasonable precautions to minimise the risk of damage to property, and of injury or death, on the campus. A lightning strike is defined in insurance terms as an 'Act of God' and while the College has no control over how a lightning bolt will strike the campus, responsibility is undertaken to put preventative measures in place and to educate the College community about the dangers of lightning. The College cannot provide guarantees against injury, death or damage to property and there are therefore limitations to liability.
2. The purpose of this procedure is to outline the reasonable precautions taken and the expected behaviour of St Stithians staff, students and parents; and visitors to the campus.
3. Everyone is expected to act reasonably and in the interests of their own safety and that of others in their care during a storm with lightning activity.
4. The College aims to provide sufficient warning regarding the status of a prevailing storm and lightning danger, and to require those who are outdoors to take shelter.
5. Whilst these guidelines are primarily for the campus, whenever staff or students participate in school-based activities off campus, these guidelines will apply so far as is reasonably practicable/possible within the environment they are in.

System

6. The College's early warning lightning detection system is linked to the service provider Africa Weather, who have partnered with the South African Weather Service for real-time lightning data.
7. The warning system is operational between 05:30 and 22:00 Monday to Sunday all year round.
8. The system is structured such that it warns of actual grounded lightning activity within a 15km radius of the College.
9. It operates on an automatic warning system with SMSs sent to the weather station on campus, the relevant Heads, Deputies, Sports Directors and various Sports Coaches, warning of storm and lightning events within our specified area of observation.
10. To alert to lightning danger, the warning alarm sounds a single long airhorn siren. The 'all clear' is signalled by two short airhorn sirens, once the lightning danger has passed. The minimum amount of time between a warning siren and an all-clear siren sounding is 30 minutes. However, should there still be lightning activity in the area after the 30 minutes has expired, the warning siren will sound again, with a further 30 minutes added to the time before the all-clear siren will sound.
11. The system cannot be operated manually by any member of staff on campus. Africa Weather have a 24-hour number that can be called in the event of a problem with the system.

Warning Strobe Lights

12. In addition to the siren, the College has installed red strobe lights that will flash for the duration that the warning siren is in operation.
13. These strobe lights are installed in selected areas of the campus, to reinforce the warning of the siren. They are also installed at all vehicle entrances to the College, to be able to warn anyone who enters the campus after the siren has sounded that there is lightning activity in the area and to take all necessary precautions to seek the necessary shelter.

Procedures to Follow

14. When the warning siren sounds it indicates that there is imminent danger from lightning.
15. All outdoor activities are to be stopped immediately and all persons are required to seek appropriate shelter as quickly as possible.
16. School buildings (constructed of brick) are considered to be the best, most suitable shelter. However, the large roofed grandstand shelters around campus have been earthed and are also considered safe.
17. Signage is installed at all sporting facilities and main gathering areas on campus.
18. Failure to comply with this Procedure by any employee or registered student of the College may result in disciplinary action.
19. Any competitive game so stopped by the threat of lightning shall be considered a game suspended due to poor weather.
20. As far as is practically possible, any external users of the College facilities will be informed of this Procedure and the necessary importance of observing it. Failure to comply may result in future use of the facilities being reconsidered.
21. When the all-clear siren sounds, external outdoor activities may resume.

Important Note

22. Parents are to please take note that staff are expected to keep students, so far as this is reasonably possible, under shelter during the period that the lightning alarm siren is active. Any parents who so choose to go against this Procedure and to remove their child from a safe zone do so at their own risk and assume responsibility for their actions.

General Safety Guidelines

The following general guidelines are to be observed in the event of the lightning alarm siren being activated. **Do Not:**

23. Wait to be told to take shelter when the siren sounds – take shelter immediately;
24. Stand under any small, unprotected shelter like a bus shelter – preferably seek shelter in a building as quickly as possible;
25. Touch anything metal and stay away from glass – this applies if you are inside a building, on a large grandstand shelter, in a car or bus, etc.
26. Touch anything that conducts electricity, such as corded phones, wiring, plumbing, and anything connected to these;
27. Stand under or touch trees or high isolated objects;
28. Stand in water – puddles, swimming pools, baths, showers, etc.;
29. Go barefoot – put shoes on immediately;
30. Stand in open fields or on hilltops;
31. Stand in groups – spread out;
32. Put yourself in danger by running onto fields, etc. to warn others to take shelter. Rather use a loud hailer or shout to them from a place of safety.
33. Lie on the ground as this increases the area where lightning that has been grounded could go through your body. The suggested professional advice is to crouch down as low to the ground as you can with your feet together. Do not be near or under trees. The idea is to not be the tallest object around.

Approved by the College Executive: 22/01/2007; 1st Amendment 22/09/2008;
2nd Amendment 30/03/2009; 3rd Amendment 04/07/2012
4th Amendment 15/02/2016; 5th Amendment 03/03/2019
Author: Head of Operations