College Station Parks and Recreation Department

# Severe Weather Best Practice

The College Station Parks and Recreation Department (CSPARD) recognizes the importance of safe practices during outdoor activities as they relate to weather hazards. The following "Best Practice" recommendations have been adopted by the CSPARD as guidelines for decision making related to outdoor activities during hazardous weather conditions. The safety of park guests is of utmost importance to us!

All participants and guests of CSPARD facilities are advised to be aware of developing or approaching weather hazards before arriving at and during all outdoor activities. League officials, event managers and sports officials (referees and umpires) are responsible for monitoring all available resources concerning weather hazards and determining suspension or continuation of outdoor activities. Coaches and parents are responsible for monitoring weather developments during activities where no official, referee, or umpire is present, and for determining suspension or continuation of outdoor activities.

## Recommended resources include:

- **Thorguard Lightning Prediction System**- This system is installed at various parks/schools around town. A comprehensive list of locations/ranges is included below. One long (15 second) blast indicates that conditions are favorable in the immediate area for lightning to strike. Three short blasts indicate that threatening conditions have diminished. Two blasts indicate an error in the system.
- **Local Radar**-Information can be obtained from websites containing local satellite information such as intellicast.com, weather.com, or KBTX.com. (KBTX.com has the most current radar)
- **KBTX-TV**- KBTX frequently has a meteorologist on-duty and will go live with weather reports if conditions warrant. They also have live Doppler radar.
- **Observation**-All persons are advised to use sight and sound when monitoring possible weather hazards.
- **NOAA weather radio**-Continuous broadcast on weather radios with updated weather information is available through NOAA 24/7.

## Recommended Actions include:

- At first sound of thunder and/or sight of lightning, **Suspend activities and notify participants to seek shelter in the safest location available** for a minimum of 15 minutes. With each audio/visual warning, start a new 15 minute count.
- 1 long (15 second) blast from Thorguard should result in suspension of activity until the "all clear" signal is heard or until other resources indicate that there is no threat.
- An enclosed substantial building or metal vehicle with the windows rolled up is suggested as safest shelter.
- Avoid metal fences, dug outs, water, light poles, trees, hills and electrical equipment.
- Presence of excessively high winds, heavy rains, hail, and funnel clouds should also be cause for suspension of play and evacuation to a safe shelter.

**Reassess the hazard/utilize available resources**

- When thunder has not been heard and lightning has not been seen for 15 minutes, or, when Thorguard sounds the "all-clear", activities may then be resumed.
- When weather conditions change, all available resources should be consulted again to aid in the determination of resuming activities.

# Thorguard Lightning Prediction and Warning System

Updated February 2005

| Park location | Monitoring Distance | Warning Distance | Unit Monitoring Hours |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pebble Creek | 6 miles | 2 miles | 8am-7pm (Nov-Mar)<br>8am-9pm (Apr-Oct) |
| Sandstone | 6 miles | 2 miles | 8am-7pm(Nov-Feb)<br>8am-9pm(Mar-Oct) |
| Southwood | 6 miles | 2 miles | 7am-Midnight |
| J & D Miller | 6 miles | 2 miles | 8am-7pm(Nov-Mar)<br>8am-9pm(Apr-Oct) |
| Wayne Smith | 6 miles | 2 miles | 7am-Midnight |
| Central Park* | 12 miles | 2.5 miles | 7am-Midnight |
| *(*Also monitors and activates remote horns at Bee Creek Park and WPC Amphitheater)* | | | |
| Thomas Park | 6miles | 2 miles | 8am-6pm(Nov-Mar)<br>8am-9pm (Apr-Oct) |
| Veterans Park | 6 miles | 2 miles | 7am-Midnight |

The **Monitoring Distance** is the radius within which the system monitors the atmospheric conditions. When the conditions inside the radius of the **Warning Distance** indicate the probability of a lightning strike, the system activates, the strobe light comes on and the 15 second horn blast occurs. The strobe light continues to flash, indicating the probability of lightning, as long as the system detects a threat. The system indicates the all-clear when 3 short blasts are heard. Two signal blasts indicate an error in the system. The **Unit Monitoring Hours** are the hours, Monday through Sunday, during which the system is monitoring atmospheric conditions.

Resources:
www.Nssl.noaa.gov
www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/outdoors

CITY OF COLLEGE STATION
Parks and Recreation Department
www.cstx.gov (979)764-3486