



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT POLICY

SUBJECT: LIGHTNING GUIDELINES FOR CITY OF LAS CRUCES PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

PURPOSE:

Provide a lightning safety program and set of guidelines designed to ensure swimming safety at all of our indoor/outdoor facilities.

POLICY & GUIDELINES:

Lightning strikes to individuals are rare but can be deadly. It is also the most consistent and significant weather hazard that can affect swimming participation. The Lightning Guidelines is a safety program and set of guidelines designed to protect, evacuate, and provide a safe structure during a lightning/thunder storm. Any report, from a staff member, park user, customer, that thunder and/or lightning has been heard or seen in the area should trigger a "Lightning Alert". In the event of a thunder or lightning storm all Parks and Recreation staff will be knowledgeable and committed to respond and implement "Lightning Guidelines" at their respected facilities.

In the event that a thunderstorm is in the area, the following safety measures must be taken. These are in affect for all outdoor activities including practices, games, and program activities. The facilities affected include all City of Las Cruces Parks, Outdoor Facilities and Recreation Facilities.

The methods that will be used to determine whether or not lightning is safe, will be the Flash Bang Method and for those with Smart Phones, an application called the "Weather Bug" is available for download at no cost.

Lightning is a very unpredictable event and is quite capable of striking anywhere and at any time throughout an active cell. Failure to follow these protocols could result in catastrophic consequences.

Park and Facility Process:

1. If lightning is spotted and corresponding thunder is heard coming directly from the cell directly overhead of our area, regardless of the distance, the area must be cleared and the appropriate shelter must be sought.
2. If the origin of the lightning strike is unknown, then any strike within a 10 mile radius warrants that the area be cleared and the appropriate shelter must be sought.

3. Seeking shelter is an immediate action. Picking up equipment or other non-essential items, meandering or purposeful slow walking or any other unnecessary delay in getting to shelter must be strictly discouraged.
4. Appropriate shelter that is safe from a lightning strike is anywhere indoors, inside a vehicle or an area that has been designated and certified as a grounded lightning safe structure.
5. Areas to avoid are underneath bleachers, an open shed, tents or canopies, metal building structures, trees, poles, metal fences and standing water, these areas should not be used as shelters.
6. A safe return can only be made once the system has clearly passed from the area and no lightning strikes within 10 miles have occurred within 30 minutes. The ranking adult on site is responsible for the accurate monitoring of the weather and the decision to seek shelter.

Outdoor Swimming Pool Process:

1. When the lightning or thunder is brought to the attention of the lifeguard on duty in the outdoor pool that lightning is present, he/she will call for the assistance of a secondary lifeguard by blowing two long whistle blasts. The secondary lifeguard will begin the "Flash Bang Method" to determine its' rough distance and speed.
2. The "Flash Bang Method" (F-B) measures the time from seeing lightning to hearing associated thunder. For each five seconds from F-B, lightning is one mile away. Thus, a F-B of 10 = 2 miles; 15 = 3 miles; 20 = 4 miles; etc. At a F-B count of thirty, the pool should be evacuated.
3. People will be directed to a safe shelter nearby. A safe shelter is defined as any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e. a building with plumbing or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure.
4. To activate the "Flash Bang Method", begin a stopwatch when sighting a lightning flash. The stopwatch is stopped when the associated bang (thunder) is heard. Divide this number by five to determine the distance of the lightning flash, in miles.
5. When it is has been determined that lightning is at least 6 miles a way, which is a count of 30 seconds between the flash and bang, the outdoor pool must be evacuated completely. The decision to evacuate the outdoor pool will be announced by one long whistle blast from the primary lifeguard on duty.
6. Pool activities will remain suspended until thirty minutes after the last thunder is heard. During this time the Lifeguard Supervisor will monitor the storm at www.nws.noaa.gov or listen to a news radio station. When it is determined by the National Weather Service that a thunderstorm warning is no longer in effect and it is safe to go outside, the Lifeguard supervisor on duty will perform another "Flash Bang" count until it is determined that lightning is greater than 6 miles away.
7. East Mesa Bataan Memorial Swimming Pool, Frenger Swimming Pool, and Laabs Swimming Pool will follow the Outdoor Swimming Pool process; although Frenger Swimming Pool has been covered; the enclosure is inadequate to be considered an indoor pool and will be treated as an outdoor pool.

8. Refunds will not be given to those guests who have been evacuated and have paid the daily session fee, however a "rain check" will be issued and is valid for 7 days after the evacuation.

Indoor Swimming Pool Process:

1. Indoor swimming pools will not be evacuated during a thunder and/or lightning storm unless the Supervisor or Head Lifeguard on duty deems the storm to be a significant weather hazard to all individuals in the facility.
2. If a significant weather warning is in the immediate area, patrons will be instructed to exit the water and remain in the building. If conditions worsen and monitored weather reports confirm the storm will last a significant duration with "stay indoors" warnings patrons will be asked to vacate the building and the indoor facility will be closed.

Facility Closure Process:

1. Supervisor or Head Lifeguard on duty will contact the Recreation Programs Manager, Parks and Recreation Administrator or Weekend Supervisor on-call to receive authorization to close the facility due to inclement weather.

Employee Training:

1. Upon arrival, all new employees will be given a special training, to learn how to correctly perform the "Flash Bang Method".
2. Once a year, all staff will be given training on the "Flash Bang Method".