NFHS/TSSAA Guidelines on Handling Practices and Contests During Lightning or Thunder Disturbances

1. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during practices and contests.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safer areas and determine the amount of time needed to get everyone to a designated safer area.
    a. A designated safer place is a substantial building with plumbing and wiring where people live or work, such as a school, gymnasium or library. An alternate safer place from the threat of lightning is fully enclosed (not convertible or soft top) metal car or school bus.
3. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play.
    a. When thunder is heard or lightning is seen*, the leading edge of the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for at least thirty minutes and vacate the outdoor activity to the previously designated safer location immediately.
    b. Thirty-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning is witnessed* prior to resuming play.
    c. Any subsequent thunder or lightning* after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
    d. When lightning-detection devices or mobile phone apps are available, this technology could be used to assist in making a decision to suspend play if a lightning strike is noted to be within 10 miles of the event location. However, you should never depend on the reliability of these devices and thus, hearing thunder or seeing lightning* should always take precedence over information from a mobile app or lightning-detection device.
4. Review the lightning safety policy annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel and train all personnel.
5. Inform student athletes and their parents of the lightning policy at start of the season.

Protocol and chain of command for suspension of play should be discussed in the pre-game meeting with the game officials. **If a host school has a policy which bases suspension of play on proximity of lightning while using a lightning detector, this must be communicated to the game officials at the pre-game meeting.** It should be clearly stated who will be in charge of monitoring the lightning detector and notifying the game officials when lightning is in the area. **If cloud to ground lightning is seen or thunder is heard by the game officials before a lightning detector displays an alert, the game shall be suspended and the 30 minute count shall begin.**

***** - *At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty.*