Severe Weather Preparedness

Lightning is the second leading cause of direct weather deaths in the United States (after floods) and results in more fatalities each year than tornadoes and hurricanes combined. Given the random nature of lightning strikes, absolute protection cannot be guaranteed to any individual or group.

Individuals are ultimately responsible for their personal safety and should take appropriate action when threatened by lightning. Adults must take responsibility for the safety of children in their care during thunderstorm activities. However, awareness of certain lightning safety guidelines can greatly reduce the risk of injury or death.

1. Identify in advance a location (e.g., building, bus, personal automobile) that would be safe during a thunderstorm. Locations that offer little or no protection from lightning include tents, golf carts, or open shelters, such as parking garages. Recommended locations for Reunions participants include dormitory common spaces in the headquarters sites, Alexander Hall, the University Chapel, and Frist Campus Center.

2. Public Safety will notify your reunion if a bad storm is expected and if evacuation of the headquarters site is recommended. When you first see lightning or hear thunder, go to the safe location immediately. Lightning often precedes rain; so don’t wait for the rain to begin before suspending activities.

3. If you are caught outdoors, avoid high ground, open spaces, and water. Avoid all metal objects including electrical wires, fences, machinery, motors, and power tools. Avoid standing under Reunions tents; while they provide protection from the rain, they do not provide protection from lightning. If lightning is striking nearby when you are outside, you should:
   
   a. Crouch down and put your feet together. Place your hands over your ears to minimize hearing damage from thunder.
   
   b. If part of a group, spread out. You should avoid being in close proximity (minimum of 15 feet) to other people.

4. Suspend outdoor activities for at least 30 minutes after the last observed lightning flash or thunder clap or until your reunion receives the “All Clear” message from Public Safety.

5. Persons injured by a lightning strike do not carry an electrical charge and can be handled safely. Apply First Aid procedures to a lightning victim if you are qualified to do so. Call Public Safety Emergency at 609-258-3333.