

GULF SWIMMING
EMERGENCY PROCEDURES DURING THUNDER AND LIGHTNING STORMS
2011-2012

The Meet Referee, in cooperation with the Meet Director, must plan for bad weather. The following information is from the Greater Houston Area Chapter of the American Red Cross with regards to facility management during storms, referenced from the most current information available in the 1994 edition of *Lifeguarding Today*.

Clearing the Facility

There are no set guidelines for determining exactly when the water should be cleared of swimmers due to an impending storm. Since sound travels more slowly than light, a safe practice is to clear all persons from the water at the first sound of thunder or sight of lightning. However, Gulf Swimming delegates this responsibility for clearing the facility to the Meet Referee. The Meet Referee should use his judgment to determine when to clear the facility. Some other suggestions are:

- Get all swimmers, parents, spectators, coaches, and officials inside.
- Keep everyone away from windows. People can be injured by flying debris or glass, if the window breaks.
- Avoid using the telephone, except in an emergency.
- Do not stay in structures in open areas, such as picnic shelters.
- Keep away from tall, isolated trees, or objects that project above the landscape. Keep away from water and grounded objects, such as metal fences, tanks, rails, and pipes.
- Get down from lifeguard chairs as soon as possible.
- Do not let anyone use the shower during a thunderstorm. Water and metal can conduct the electricity of lightning.

Return to the Facility

As a general rule, a thunderstorm is considered "as ended" when there has been no sound of thunder within the last 15 minutes. However, an additional factor to consider is whether or not the sky is dark and threatening. Unless there are evident signs of clearing, the storm should not be considered "ended". You may want to consider an additional 5-15 minutes safety margin before allowing the swimmers to return to the swimming facility. Again, Gulf Swimming delegates this responsibility for returning to the facility to the Meet Referee.