

**Subject:** Youth Soccer Insider: Lightning can be lethal: Here's what to know

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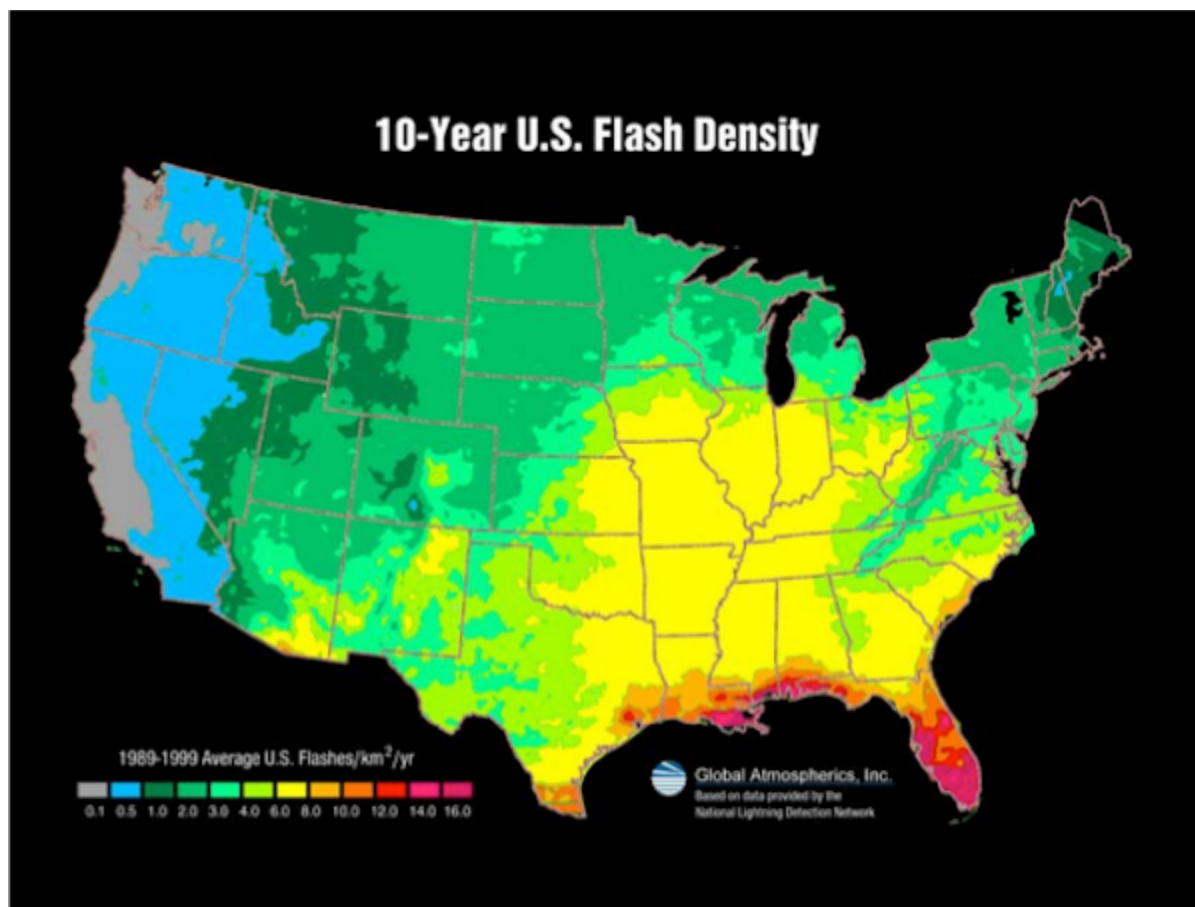
## YouthSoccerInsider

Saturday, July 7, 2018

### Lightning can be lethal: Here's what to know

by Dr. Dev Mishra

The end of summer and early fall are some of the busiest times of the year for outdoor sports participation, and unfortunately this is also the time of year with the highest number of cloud-to-ground lightning strikes. According to data from the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#), the NOAA, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes each year. The highest number occurs in southeast Florida and decreases toward the western United States.



In the chart above, the red areas indicate a high concentration of lightning strikes and the grey areas the least.

Lightning represents a significant risk to outdoor athletes. Metal objects such as golf clubs, aluminum baseball bats, and bicycles will all attract lightning. Lightning-related deaths are the third most common among weather-related deaths and account for between 50 and 300 deaths per year in the United States.

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The best way to stay safe is incredibly simple: don't be out playing if lightning is suspected. The NOAA has issued a series of published recommendations that are well worth following:

- Absolutely no practice or games outdoors during active lightning storms.
- [“When the thunder roars, go indoors.”](#) Play should not resume until at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or flash of lightning.
- The old “30 second” rule for flash-to-bang calculations to estimate lightning distances has been abandoned. If you hear thunder you're at risk.

- If you're caught in a thunderstorm try to get indoors in a building. Buildings with electric and telephone wiring and plumbing are ideal because this can be a form of "grounding," carrying the electrical current away. If there's no building available, a hard-topped automobile with the windows closed is the next best option. Try not to touch metal in the car.
- Avoid contact with the tallest object in an open field (like a tall tree) or any body of water. The safest position to assume is a crouched position with the feet close together and weight entirely on the balls of the feet.

If you are running a team or league it's best to have a clear policy in place at the start of the season for a lightning safety protocol, identifying safe locations, and guidelines for resuming play.

**NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE'S**  
[Lightning Safety and Outdoor Sports Activities](#)

**KEY POINTS:**

- The summer months are the peak time of year for lightning strikes.
- If you hear thunder, abandon outdoor practice and go indoors. "If the thunder roars, go indoors."
- Outdoor play should not resume for at least 30 minutes after thunder and lightning stops.

([Dr. Dev K. Mishra](#), a Clinical Assistant Professor of orthopedic surgery at Stanford University, is the creator of the [SidelineSportsDoc.com online injury-management course](#), now a requirement for [US Club Soccer](#) coaches and staff members. Mishra writes about injury recognition and management at [SidelineSportsDoc.com Blog](#), where this article first appeared.



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