

LIGHTNING PROTECTION ON THE GOLF COURSE

by

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WHEN Lightning Strikes—Be Prepared!
Be Protected!

This common-sense admonition aptly and succinctly expresses the concern of the USGA about the danger confronting persons on a golf course during electrical storms.

This danger is by no means over-emphasized. The National Safety Council reported that 220 people were killed by lightning in 1954, this total representing an increase of 51% over the previous year. An estimated 1,000 persons are injured by lightning annually.

Consider, if you will, the recent narrow escape of six golfers and two caddies at the Gardiner's Bay Country Club, Shelter Island, N. Y. Caught on the course during an electrical storm, they discontinued play and sought the protection of a rain shelter. There, in what they reasoned to be comparative safety, they settled down to wait out the storm.

The structure, however, received a direct hit by lightning. Those who had sought protection were blown from the shelter with such force that shoes were blown from the feet of some of the players. All were shocked and burned—one of the caddies requiring hospitalization. Fortunately, there were no fatalities.

The Rules of Golf specifically mention and allow for the danger of lightning. Rule 37-6 (Discontinuance of Play) states, in part:

"Players shall not discontinue play on account of bad weather or for any other reason, unless:—

a. They consider that there be danger from lightning . . ."

Contestants in USGA Championships are rarely called upon to invoke this privilege. A siren is mounted prior to each competi-

tion and is sounded three times, signifying discontinuance of play, whenever lightning threatens.

The following are suggestions from "Protection of Persons Against Lightning on Golf Courses", which is published on a poster and in the USGA Rules of Golf booklet:

(a) Do not go out of doors or remain out during thunderstorms unless it is necessary. Stay inside of a building where it is dry, preferably away from fireplaces, stoves and other metal objects.

(b) If there is any choice of shelter, choose in the following order:

1. Large metal or metal frame buildings.
2. Dwellings or other buildings which are protected against lightning.
3. Large unprotected buildings.
4. Small unprotected buildings.

(c) If remaining out of doors is unavoidable, keep away from:

1. Small sheds and shelters if in an exposed location.
2. Isolated trees.
3. Wire fences.
4. Hilltops and wide open spaces.

(d) Seek shelter in:

1. A cave.
2. A depression in the ground.
3. A deep valley or canyon.
4. The foot of a steep or overhanging cliff.
5. Dense woods.
6. A grove of trees.

Note: It is understood that raising golf clubs or umbrellas above the head is dangerous.

The USGA recommends that all clubs call the attention of their members to these suggestions. Free copies, suitable for posting, are available through the USGA.