

Guidelines in Dealing with Force Majeure Events – Thunderstorms ¹

1. PURPOSE

With rugby being played in summer, lightning may impact on match completions and more importantly, safety of players and officials.

The guidelines have been compiled taking into consideration the guidelines below:

- 1.1. World Rugby Lightning Safety Guideline
- 1.2. SARU Guidelines for Dealing with Lightning
- 1.3. General Competition Rules

2. RESPONSIBILITY

The Match Referee is responsible:

- To ensure that the playing enclosure is safe for the players to participate.
- Pursuant to which she/he may:
 - delay;
 - suspend or
 - abandon the match in accordance with the general competition rules (Abstracts below from competition rules) and law 5.10:
 - **6. KICK-OFF BEING DELAYED AND/OR MATCH UNABLE TO START DUE TO A FORCE MAJEURE EVENT**
 - *6.1 Should circumstances, due to a Force Majeure event, warrant a delay in the commencement of a Match then the referee, in his sole discretion, shall determine whether:*
 - *6.1.1. the Match may continue as scheduled, albeit delayed, as soon as reasonably and practically possible after the Force Majeure event has subsided; or*
 - *6.1.2. the venue and pitch have not been rendered unplayable as a consequence of the Force Majeure.*
 - **7. ABANDONMENT OF A MATCH AFTER COMMENCEMENT AS RESULT OF A FORCE MAJEURE EVENT**
 - *7.1. Should the referee elect to abandon the Match prior to the expiry of the first half of Playing Time then the Match shall be rescheduled in accordance with clause 6.3 of the general competition rules.*

¹ The principle applied in this document is also applicable to other Force Majeure event types (hailstones, stadium lights, flooding, ext.) that causes a match to be Suspended, Delayed or Abandoned.

- *7.2. Should the referee elect to abandon the Match at half time or during the second half of Playing Time then the winning Team shall be determined based on the score at the time of the abandonment of the Match. Should the scores be level at the time of abandonment of the Match the winning Team shall be determined in accordance with clause 4.4.2 of the general competition rules.*

The Match Manager must:

Provide the relevant supporting information to the Match Referee during the match regarding the state of the thunderstorm.

3. MATCH SUSPENSION/DELAY

- 3.1. When the lightning strike is within 10 km of the venue, the Match Referee **must**:
 - 3.1.1. Suspend the match or delay the kick-off or restart kick
 - 3.1.2. Request all players and personnel to leave the playing enclosure to pre-identified safe areas as determined by the Match Manager
- 3.2 Irrespective of the equipment or application utilised, the match referee must use verified information that the lightning has moved **further than 20 km away** from the venue before the Match Referee may resume the match.
- 3.3 Verified information will be determined from the following methods:
 - 3.3.1 Stadium Lightning detection devices used on the day
 - 3.3.2 Hand-held device
 - 3.3.3 Local meteorological services
 - 3.3.4 30/30 rule - For events/venues where applicable lightning devices and live data direct from local weather services is not available. The rule applied is as follows:
 - 3.3.4.1 Seek shelter when there is **30 seconds** or less between the flash and the associated thunderclap
 - 3.3.4.2 Safe to return to the field of play once a minimum of **30 minutes** after the final flash of lightning or clap of thunder has been seen/heard

4. MATCH ABANDONMENT

- 4.1. Based on the evidence from lightning detection devices, the appointed 'lightning monitor', all local weather service communications and the guidelines provided for in clause 1, the decision to abandon the match lies with the Match Referee.
- 4.2. The match will be abandoned if it is unable to start thirty (30) minutes from the scheduled kick-off time.
- 4.3. In the interest of player welfare, a match suspended must restart within thirty (30) minutes from the time the match referee suspended the match.
 - 4.3.1.1. If the match is unable to resume after half time, the thirty (30) minute time frame will commence immediately after half time
- 4.4. The official timekeeper keeps time and informs the Match Manager and Match Referee once the thirty (30) minute mark is reached.

5. NOTIFICATION

- 5.1. The Match Referee, in conjunction with the Match Manager, will inform the Team Coaches and/or CEOs of the status of the match and on the decision to abandon the match,
- 5.2. While the final decision rests with the Match Referee, he will do so in consultation with the SARU Referee Manager (or appointed nominee from the Referees' Department) and the SARU Tournament Director.
- 5.3. The SARU Tournament Director will inform the SARU CEO and Communication Department of the decision to abandon the match.
- 5.4. The Match Referee will take a photograph of the scoreboard and the evidence provided by the Match Manager from the lightning device at the time the decision is made to abandon the match.
 - 5.4.1. Photograph sent to the SARU Referee Manager (or appointed nominee from the Referees' Department) and the SARU Tournament Director for record keeping.