



## ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL

**SECTION: Facilities, Vehicles and Equipment**
**POLICY NO.: 7012**
**ADMINISTERING DEPARTMENT (S): Clearwater Fire and Rescue Department**
**SUBJECT: Emergency Alert System**

**PURPOSE:** To establish guidance for staff during severe weather and to incorporate the citywide Emergency Alert System into the warning and notification process.

**POLICY:** This policy is for all employees, internal and external stakeholders, and community members who use the beach and any of our athletic facilities, recreation centers and community parks as listed below. The Emergency Alert System is equipped to detect when severe weather is within a set proximity and provide an audible alert or generalized messaging based on individual departmental needs. The Emergency Alert System will be active 24 hours a day; however, the audible alert or voice messaging will comply with city ordinance and be active only between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. at Clearwater Beach and Coachman Park. All other facilities will be monitored during park hours or during scheduled events or athletic activities. These safety guidelines are not intended to be all inclusive. All people must assume personal responsibility and always remove themselves from danger.

### **Administrative Repeal:**

The provisions contained herein shall supersede and replace all prior policies and procedures regarding this subject.

/s/Jennifer Poirrier  
Jennifer Poirrier, City Manager

5/21/24  
Date

**Procedure:** See attached.

Effective Date: 05/21/2024\_\_\_\_\_

Reference(s):

Statutes: \_\_\_\_\_ Ordinances: \_\_\_\_\_ Resolutions: \_\_\_\_\_ Legal Opinions: \_\_\_\_\_

Administering Department \_\_\_\_\_ Policy Committee \_\_\_\_\_



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**RATIONALE:** Florida is known as the lightning capital of the United States. That means at any given moment, especially during the summer, life-threatening conditions can arise along the Gulf Coast and pose a dangerous threat to any outdoor activity. City staff, swimmers, beachgoers, and park users are at greatest risk of injury during severe weather. Keeping people safe is of the utmost importance to the city of Clearwater. Therefore, an Emergency Alert System has been installed at Clearwater Beach and at key Parks and Recreation locations throughout the city, including BayCare Sound.

### Clearwater Beach

1. **Overview:** The Emergency Alert System should be used as a tool and in conjunction with the Clearwater Fire & Rescue Lifeguard Division Lifeguard Lightning Safety Plan (S.D.P. 701P) within operating hours. This plan has taken into consideration guidance from the National Weather Service (NWS) and the United States Lifesaving Association.
  - 1.1 Weather Watcher: Designates a person or people to monitor lightning and severe weather each day.
  - 1.2 Weather watcher reviews available forecasts. NWS advisories, watches and warnings can be monitored at <https://www.weather.gov/tbw/> Thunderstorm and severe weather forecasts are also online at <http://www.spc.noaa.gov>.
  - 1.3 If the weather watcher has questions about a storm, contact the NWS in Ruskin at 813-645-2323.
  - 1.4 Weather watcher notifies lifeguard staff of predicted weather hazards.
  - 1.5 Weather watcher and other lifeguard staff use available tools to monitor weather.
    - 1.5.1. NOAA weather radio
    - 1.5.2. On-site lightning detector (*Severe Weather Alert System*)
    - 1.5.3. Smartphone application (*Bay News 9, Weather Bug, NWS*)
    - 1.5.4. Commercial notification subscription (*optional*)



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### **2. 6- to 15-Mile Process:**

- 2.1 When lightning is detected within 6 to 15 miles, the Emergency Alert System will notify the lifeguard weather watcher.
- 2.2 If it appears the thunderstorm is moving nearby or if a more organized thunderstorm or cluster of thunderstorms (supercells, squall lines, bow echoes) are headed for the location, the weather watcher should notify lifeguard staff and consider protective actions.
- 2.3 Protective actions
  - 2.3.1. Depending on the storm track, consider closing facilities that do not provide protection from lightning.
  - 2.3.2. Consider notifying the public of the lightning threat and recommend actions based on storm track:
  - 2.3.3. Consider initiating predetermined evacuation plans for lifeguard staff.
  - 2.3.4. Ensure lifeguard staff members take action to protect themselves.

### **3. 0 to 5 Mile Process:**

- 3.1 When lightning is detected within 5 miles, the notification system will automatically alert staff via the internal messaging system and the public via the audible alert.
- 3.2 The weather watcher will notify management and staff, then proceed with implementing the protective actions.
- 3.3 Protective actions.
  - 3.3.1. Close lifeguard towers that do not provide protection from lightning and move all staff to Tower 0.
  - 3.3.2. The Emergency Alert System will broadcast an audible warning and message notifying people of the threat and recommended course of action.
    - 3.3.2.1 Alert message templates, approved by the city's Public Communications Department, will be utilized.



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3.3.2.2 Close the water by utilizing red flags, lifeguard staff and system notifications.

3.3.2.3 Instruct beachgoers to leave and find shelter (identify appropriate shelter).

No place outdoors is safe if lightning is in the area. If a substantial building is not available, fully enclosed motor vehicles can provide shelter as long as occupants do not touch the metal framework during the thunderstorm. If no protection from lightning is available, direct patrons to stay away from the tallest objects (lifeguard stands, light poles, flag poles), metal objects (fences or bleachers), standing pools of water, and open areas.

3.3.3. Implement predetermined evacuation plans for all lifeguard staff.

3.3.4. Ensure staff members take action to protect themselves.

### **4. All Clear:**

- 4.1 The weather watcher will continue to monitor the proximity of thunderstorms and utilize local observations and the Emergency Alert System to make an informed decision. Management may then allow for normal activities to resume after 30 minutes of no detected lightning strikes within a 5-mile radius of the location. The weather watcher will notify the public that beach and water activities can resume utilizing the Emergency Alert System.

## **Parks and Recreation**

### **1. Process:**

- 1.1. When lightning is detected between 7 and 15 miles away, the Emergency Alert System will notify parks staff.
- 1.2. When lightning is detected within 6 miles, the Emergency Alert System will broadcast an audible warning and message recommending people take shelter.
  - 1.2.1 Alert message templates, approved by the city's Public Communications Department, will be utilized.
- 1.3. A safe shelter should be an enclosed public building with electrical service and plumbing, but a vehicle can be used as safe shelter if needed as a last resort.



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### **2. All Clear:**

- 2.1. All outdoor activities should not resume until a minimum of 30 minutes has passed from the last lightning strike within 6 miles and an all clear has been issued by the Emergency Alert System.

### **3. Monitored Sites:**

- 3.1. Facilities – Clearwater Beach Recreation Center, Coachman Park, Countryside Community Park, Countryside Sports Complex, Crest Lake Park, Eddie C. Moore Complexes, Frank Tack Fields, Glen Oaks Park, Henry L. McMullen Tennis Complex, Jack Russell Stadium, Joe DiMaggio Sports Complex, Long Center, Moccasin Lake Nature Park, Morningside Recreation Center, North Greenwood Recreation Center, Philip Jones, Ross Norton Recreation Center and Ballfields, Sid Lickton Complex, Walter Campbell Park.
- 3.2. Please note - The BayCare Sound at Coachman Park will have a separate monitoring and alerting protocol.

### **Coachman Park**

#### **1. Purpose and Scope:**

- 1.1. To provide general information for the monitoring of severe weather and establish the emergency response procedures at Coachman Park and City produced events at The BayCare Sound.

#### **2. Monitors:**

- 2.1. City staff (Parks and Recreation, Clearwater Police Department, Clearwater Fire & Rescue Department, Public Communications and any outside event organizers and their staff) will continually monitor weather conditions using various resources:
  - 2.1.1. NOAA weather radio (162.400 MHZ) or KHB32, Tampa internet radio
  - 2.1.2. Local weather and radar applications
  - 2.1.3. The Emergency Alert System

#### **3. Assessment & Authorization:**



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3.1. The presence of any of the following will trigger the decision-making process to assess for the likelihood of dangerous conditions and the need for precautionary action:

3.1.2. Visible/auditory presence of thunder and/or lightning

3.1.3. Weather warning issued for the area.

3.1.4. Notification from the Emergency Alert System.

3.1.1.1. When lightning is detected between 7 and 15 miles away, the Emergency Alert System will alert city staff and staff will consider protective actions.

3.1.1.2. When lightning is detected within 6 miles, the Emergency Alert System will alert city staff who will then implement protective measures which may include delaying or cancelling events at The BayCare Sound.

3.1.1.3. Alert message templates approved by the city's Public Communications Department will be used if events are delayed or cancelled.

### **4. Evacuation Management:**

4.1. The City's Emergency Management Team will coordinate tasks necessary to interrupt the event and direct everyone to safety.

4.2. A safe shelter should be an enclosed public building with electricity and plumbing, but a vehicle can be used as safe shelter if needed as a last resort.

### **5. Potential Evacuation Locations:**

5.1. Venue restrooms

5.2. Under venue canopy

5.3. Personal vehicles

5.4. Public library (during normal operating hours)

5.5. Capitol Theatre (if open and available)

5.6. Local retail



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### **6. Re-Entry / Event Resumes:**

- 6.1. The City's Staff (Parks and Recreation, Clearwater Police Department, Clearwater Fire & Rescue Department, Public Communications and any outside event organizers and their staff) will assess when re-entry is permissible for the event to resume. Public messaging will be coordinated by a city representative.

### **Ruth Eckerd Hall Events at The BayCare Sound**

#### **1. Purpose and Scope:**

- 1.1. To provide general information for the monitoring of severe weather and establish the emergency response procedures at The BayCare Sound during Ruth Eckerd Hall sponsored events.

#### **2. Monitors:**

- 2.1. The BayCare Sound will be subject to the Ruth Eckerd Hall's severe weather policy during events managed by Ruth Eckerd Hall.
- 2.2. The security manager and venue manager will coordinate with city staff. All decisionmaking will fall under Ruth Eckerd Hall's contract with the city; Ruth Eckerd will be responsible for managing its sponsored events.
- 2.3. The lightning detection portion of the Emergency Alert System will remain active for Ruth Eckerd Hall's use.
  - 2.3.1. To provide unified messaging, Ruth Eckerd Hall will utilize its own means of communicating safety messages, protective measures, delays, cancellations, or re-entry.





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### Weather Appendix:

1. A watch is issued when conditions are favorable for the development of severe weather and/or tornadoes in and close to the watch area. A watch does not mean that severe weather is actually occurring; only that conditions have created such a risk.
2. A warning is an alert issued by the National Weather Service to warn an area that a tornado (or waterspout or severe thunderstorm) may be imminent. It can be issued after either a tornado or a funnel cloud has already been spotted, or if there are radar indications that a tornado may be possible. Warnings are also issued for the presence of severe thunderstorms that could contain hail, high winds, or dangerous lightning.

### Appendixes

Clearwater Fire & Rescue SDP 701P

Ruth Eckerd Hall Severe Weather at The BayCare Sound Policy