

Now for something a little different. This article "**Lightning Can Kill**" written by Doug Cundall is prudent advice that our travelling umpires should be aware of. Doug, an IV umpire, is one of seven Deputy Umpire-In-Chief's with Softball Canada and has been officiating since 1966.

Whilst lightning is hardly ever encountered throughout the New Zealand domestic season, it's devastating effect however has been experienced by some of our umpires who have travelled and umpired in North America and Asia.

LIGHTNING CAN KILL!

Every year we hear stories of people being hit with lightning while doing some outdoor activity. *Here in Ontario, we have had deaths and injuries from lightning strikes on participants in sporting events.*

How far away is a safe distance from a storm? The Canadian Geographical magazine, in their most recent issue, has an article on the dangers of lightning. They suggest *that you can be hit by lightning from as far away as 16 kilometres from the storm.* As a "rule" to determine if you are in danger, you should see a flash and then count seconds. If you hear the thunder in less than 30-seconds, you are in danger. Get to a safe location - away from metal structures (ball screens, fences), tall structures (light standards, trees) or out of open fields (playing fields).

As officials, we need to be very cautious about continuing a ball game under any storm or potential storm situation. *If you see lightning flashes and hear thunder in under the 30-second time, stop the game and ask all participants to take shelter.*

Going into a vehicle is one of the safest places to be during a lightning storm. Stay in the vehicle until the lightning storm passes.

Be overly cautious. If in doubt, stop the game.

Softball New Zealand acknowledges Doug Cundall for allowing it to reproduce the above article. Being aware of different environments is an important part of the preparation and development of the complete umpire.