



# Ensuring weather safety and optimizing operational performance

The Columbus Crew, Columbus, Ohio

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Andrew Northeim,  
head groundskeeper,  
The Columbus Crew

Established in 1996, the Columbus Crew professional soccer club is one of Major League Soccer's founding teams, playing in its eastern conference.

Its current stadium, Lower.com Field, opened in 2021, and features a capacity of 20,000, including 2,000 club seats, 10 field suites, 33 premium suites, and more than 3,000 Nordecke seats. The grounds crew carefully manages the four and a half grass fields, plus the artificial turf located at OhioHealth Performance Center, its 42,300 square-foot state-of-the-art training facility.

The facility, located on the grounds of the Historic Crew Stadium site, houses four fields, eight locker rooms, the Crew's first and second teams, and four academy teams.

**DTN**



## What they were up against.

Like most sports teams and venues, the Columbus Crew is concerned about lightning risks.

When Andrew Northeim, head groundskeeper, joined the organization in 2014, staff would monitor weather conditions on their computers and smartphones, looking for potential lightning strikes during practices and games. They didn't have a solution that would automatically alert them to approaching hazards, which is essential with the fast-developing thunderstorms often experienced in the Midwest.

The effort took considerable time and energy. It also left room for human error, including the possibility of unnecessarily interrupting play and evacuating spectators, players, and staff. More importantly, hands-on monitoring could shorten the critical runway needed to communicate the risk and quickly move people to safety in a clear, calm, and organized way.

## What we did to help.

Today, the Columbus Crew relies on WeatherSentry® and OnGuard Siren Alerting from DTN. WeatherSentry provides accurate, location-specific forecasts and critical risk management tools, including much-needed lightning

alerts based on the team's unique watch and warning zones. Its layered map interface shows a customizable view of current and forecast conditions, such as real-time radar and future radar, which projects the likely short-term path of storms. Lightning strike data layers can also drive greater situational awareness.

The OnGuard Siren plays a critical role in moving people to safety in advance of dangerous weather. When activated, the on-site solution sounds an alarm and flashes its beacon, notifying everyone that it is time to evacuate the area. By pairing OnGuard with WeatherSentry's powerful lightning and severe weather alerts, The Columbus Crew's staff no longer must manually monitor conditions. They know in advance when conditions will pose a genuine threat, and they can quickly put their weather safety plans into action.

Having an on-site alerting system is also important during the off-hours, when others may be using the field and staff may not be on-hand.

The organization chose DTN not only for its leading-edge products but also for the ease of working with the company's sales and service teams.



**"I'm confident that when a storm is approaching, OnGuard will go off when lightning is in the area. It gives us more freedom to do other aspects of our jobs outside of tracking the weather."**

Andrew Northeim

### **What the impact was.**

"One of the biggest benefits of our DTN solutions is that we no longer have to worry about constantly tracking the weather ourselves," said Northeim. "When we receive an alert, we can quickly pull up the live data, fed by our on-site weather station, and take a look."

Northeim added that WeatherSentry's forecasts and management tools also help his team plan their daily work.

"The weather is a major factor in everything we do," he said. "Especially in timing the application of expensive chemicals and fertilizers. Having access to accurate insights helps us ensure we're not wasting product and that we get our full ROI."

In particular, the wind, temperature, and precipitation data and outlooks are essential for the grounds crew. Their WeatherSentry includes the color-coded Spray Outlook tool that shows the risk factors in their chosen four-hour spray window. It helps ensure the product won't be washed away and will have the drying time it needs to be effective.

The OnGuard Siren Alerting solution has proven very reliable for the organization.

"Last spring there were storms approaching, but the team wanted to get in as much training as possible," Northeim explained. "But once the OnGuard siren went off, they went inside."

"Normally, they would go back out again after the all-clear notification. However, on this particular day, they decided to end the practice and not go back out because the rain didn't let up."

"OnGuard performed as it should that day. It gave all three notifications — the initial advisory, the caution, and the actual warning."

With WeatherSentry, The Columbus Crew not only has a hands-free way to monitor for weather threats but through the OnGuard solution, they can clearly and instantly warn everyone that it's time to move to shelter, too.