



Lightning Strikes

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TOPIC: Lightning Strikes

The average bolt of lightning carries over 100,000,000 volts and can reach out over 100 miles. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), lightning is one of the leading weather-related causes of death and injury in the United States. It is estimated that the Earth is struck by this incredible electric force more than 100 times every second. The odds of being struck by lightning in your lifetime are 1 in 3,000.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding and misinformation regarding this powerful natural phenomenon. Let's explore some of the facts.

- Some forms of lightning originate and release from high up in the thunderstorm cloud. This lightning can strike far away from the actual rain storm – up to 5-10 miles in front or behind the storm. Many people are struck by lightning without realizing they are in a lightning risk area.
- If you can hear thunder, you are within 10 miles of a storm and are within reach of lightning. This is the time to seek shelter.
- Rubber-soled shoes provide absolutely no protection from lightning.
- Buildings that are not equipped with grounded plumbing or electrical wiring are unable to conduct electrical current and do not offer protection from lightning. This means that you are still vulnerable if you seek shelter in a bus stop, shed, golf hut, park pavilion, etc.
- Stay away from tall objects if caught in a storm. **Trees are one of the worst forms of shelter from lightning.** They offer a false sense of security and, if anything, attract lightning.
- An automobile can offer protection by acting like a Faraday cage, provided that the occupants do not touch the metal of the car while inside.
- When lightning strikes it can easily travel through electrical wire. Avoid using electrical devices (computers, hair dryers, etc.) during a storm to prevent injury.

So, what if you are caught in a vulnerable place during a storm?

- If you begin to feel the hair on your body or head begin to rise, this could be a sign that the positive charge of your body is reaching up to the negative charge of the sky. A strike could be imminent. Stay low and seek shelter. If caught in the open, crouch low. **Do not lie on the ground.** You are more apt to receive a secondary shock from the ground if lightning strikes near you.
- If someone is struck, they do not contain an electric charge. Provide first aid immediately and be prepared to provide CPR. Call emergency response services.

Questions to Generate Discussion

- When is the best time to seek shelter from a thunderstorm?
- Is it possible to be struck by lightning even when it is sunny?

Discussion Date: _____

Employee Participants:

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