



## LIGHTNING SAFETY FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

### WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS!

Each year in the United States, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes and about 300 people struck by lightning. Of those struck, about 30 people are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be prevented. When thunderstorms threaten, get inside a building with plumbing and electricity, or a hard-topped metal vehicle!

The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent these tragedies. Many lightning victims say they were “caught” outside in the storm and couldn’t get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter. With proper planning, similar tragedies can be avoided.

Some people were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside a safe building or vehicle for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder. While 30 minutes may seem like a long time, it is necessary to be safe.

Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby!

### AVOID THE LIGHTNING THREAT

- ✓ **Have a lightning safety plan.** Know where you’ll go for safety and ensure you’ll have enough time to get there.
- ✓ **Postpone activities.** Consider postponing activities if thunderstorms are forecast.
- ✓ **Monitor the weather.** Once outside, look for signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm such as towering clouds, darkening skies, or flashes of lightning.
- ✓ **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, even a distant rumble, seek safety immediately. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are best. A hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed is also safe. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- ✓ **If you hear thunder, don’t use a corded phone except in an emergency.** Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.
- ✓ **Keep away from electrical equipment and plumbing.** Lightning can travel through the wiring and plumbing if your building is struck. Don’t take a bath or shower, or wash dishes during a storm.

*Lightning discharge on a golf green. Photo: E. Philip Krider*

*Stadiums and other outdoor venues should have a lightning safety plan. Photo: NOAA*



## WHAT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT LIGHTNING

- ✓ **All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous.** Fortunately, people can be safe if they follow some simple guidelines when thunderstorms are forecast.
- ✓ **Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall.** Many lightning strikes occur ahead of storms before any rain arrives or after storms have seemingly passed and the rain has ended.
- ✓ **If you can hear thunder, you are in danger.** Don't be fooled by blue skies. If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to pose an immediate threat.
- ✓ **Lightning leaves many victims with permanent disabilities.** While only about 10 percent of lightning victims die, many survivors must live the rest of their lives with intense pain, neurological disabilities, depression and other health problems.



**When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!**

**STOP all activities.**

Seek shelter in a substantial building or hard-topped vehicle.

Wait 30 minutes after storm to resume activities.

 [www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov) 

### ORGANIZED OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

It's essential that people in charge of organized outdoor activities understand the dangers of lightning and have a lightning safety plan. Don't be afraid to ask. If you hear thunder, it's time to get to a safe building or vehicle. Speak up!

### DON'T GET CAUGHT OUTSIDE

No place outside is safe when a thunderstorm is in the area. Get inside as soon as you hear thunder. Run to a substantial building or hard-topped metal vehicle as fast as you can. If you can't get to a safe building or vehicle:

- ✓ **Avoid open areas.** Don't be the tallest object in the area.
- ✓ **Stay away from isolated tall trees, towers or utility poles.** Lightning tends to strike the taller objects in an area.
- ✓ **Stay away from metal conductors such as wires or fences.**  
Metal does not attract lightning, but lightning can travel long distances through it.
- ✓ **If you are with a group of people, spread out.** While this actually increases the chance that someone might get struck, it tends to prevent multiple casualties, and increases the chances that someone could help if a person is struck.

### IF SOMEONE IS STRUCK

Cardiac arrest is the primary cause of death for those who die. Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and may need first aid immediately.

- ✓ **Call for help. Call 9-1-1.**
- ✓ **Give first aid. Begin CPR if you are trained.**
- ✓ **Use an Automatic External Defibrillator if one is available.**  
These units are lifesavers!
- ✓ **Don't be a victim.** If possible, move the victim to a safer place. Lightning CAN strike twice.