



Lightning Safety

Lightning has been the second largest storm killer in the U.S. for the last 40 years, exceeded only by floods. In the United States, there are an estimated 25 million lightning flashes each year. While documented lightning injuries in the U.S. average about 300 per year, undocumented injuries are likely much higher.

Watch for Developing Thunderstorms

Clouds that grow vertically into towering cumulus clouds are often the first sign of a developing thunderstorm.

When to Seek Safe Shelter

Lightning can strike as far as 10 miles from the area where it is raining. That's about the distance you can hear thunder. **If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance--seek safe shelter immediately.**

A safe shelter is an enclosed building with plumbing and electrical wiring that will direct the charge to the ground. An enclosed vehicle (with closed windows and rubber tires) is also safe. Avoid open-air structures and tall trees; don't stay on open water.

Outdoors

Stop any organized outdoor sporting activity at the first roar of thunder to ensure everyone has time to get to a large building or enclosed vehicle. No place outside is safe near a thunderstorm! If you feel hairs standing up on the back of your neck, lightning may strike very near you in a matter of moments. Crouch down, hug your knees and try to balance on the balls of your feet. The less contact you have with the ground the better.

Indoors

Stay off corded phones, computers and other electrical equipment that put you in direct contact with electricity. Buy ground fault protectors (better: unplug sensitive equipment). Stay away from metal plumbing fixtures and running water.

It's a Rule--Wait!

Wait at least **30 minutes** after the last clap of thunder before leaving shelter or resuming any indoor activity involving equipment that runs on electricity or contact with plumbing fixtures. Don't be fooled by sunshine or blue sky!

Helping a Lightning Strike Victim

Call 911 immediately and start CPR if necessary. Cardiac arrest and heart irregularities, burns, and nerve damage are common injuries. With proper treatment, most victims survive. You are in no danger helping a lightning victim. The charge will not affect you.

Summary

With common sense, you can greatly increase your safety and the safety of those you are with.

