



Gulf Coast Safety Council

SUMMER LIGHTNING



Lightning may be one of the most beautiful phenomena that nature puts on display, but it is also one of the most dangerous and summer is peak lightning season.

According to NOAA, lightning is the second most frequent weather-related killer in the United States, causing an average of nearly 100 deaths and 500 injuries each year. Yet, because lightning affects only one or a few people at a time and does not cause widespread destruction, many underestimate the severe risks it poses.



The National Weather Service reports that taking cover under trees is the second leading cause of lightning

casualties. While no place is absolutely safe from lightning, some are much safer than others. The best place to be during a thunderstorm is in a large, enclosed building. Avoid partially enclosed structures such as carports, picnic shelters and sheds. Once inside, unplug all unnecessary appliances and avoid using the telephone and other electrical devices, since electricity from a lightning strike can travel through electrical wiring. Avoid taking a bath or shower during a thunderstorm as well.



Just because you are far away from the rain or the thunderstorm cloud, you can still be affected. Lightning can, and often does, strike up to ten miles from a

thunderstorm. Although rare, lightning can travel horizontally for many miles and strike the ground far away from the storm cloud. These bolts seem to come out of a clear blue sky and are thus called “bolts from the blue.” The best general rule to follow in order to avoid lightning strikes is to practice the 30/30 lightning safety rule. If, after seeing lightning, you can’t count to 30 before hearing the thunder, go indoors. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

The human body does not store electricity, so it is perfectly safe to touch someone who has been struck by lightning. You cannot be electrocuted when administering first aid or



CPR to a lightning-strike victim.

Laying flat on the ground actually **increases** your chances of being struck by lightning, because the electrical current can run along the ground. If you get stuck outside during a thunderstorm and cannot reach a safe shelter, get as low as you can and touch the ground as little as possible. Keeping your feet together, squat low, tuck your head and cover your ears.

If you absolutely cannot get to a safe building or vehicle, follow these tips as a last resort:

- Do not seek shelter under partially enclosed buildings.
- Should a thunderstorm plague your camp site, set up camp in a lower area and stay away from tall, isolated trees.

- Wet ropes are excellent conductors of electricity. When mountain or rock climbing, be sure to remove any unnecessary ropes that may be attached to you.
- Stay away from metal objects such as fences and poles. Metal is a conductor, and the current from a lightning flash can travel across metal for long distances.
- Stay at least 15 feet away from other people so the current won't travel from person to person should lightning strike.

In addition to following these tips, be aware of the local weather forecast before heading out for extended periods of time and use common sense to ensure your safety and the safety of your loved ones.

Remember: When thunder roars, stay indoors!