



Lightning Safety Tips

The following tips are provided by the National Weather Service and can greatly reduce the risk of injury or death from lightning strikes.

Safe Places

No place is absolutely safe from a lightning threat; however, some places are safer than others:

- During a lightning storm, find shelter in a substantial building or a motor vehicle (windows closed).
- Large enclosed structures tend to be much safer than smaller or open structures.
- When indoors, avoid use of the telephone, taking a shower, washing your hands, doing dishes, or any contact with conductive surfaces with exposure to the outside such as metal door or window frames, electrical wiring, telephone wiring, cable TV wiring, plumbing, etc.
- Fully enclosed metal vehicles such as cars, trucks, buses and vans provide good shelter from lightning when the windows are rolled up. Avoid contact with conducting surfaces of the vehicle.
- Avoid being in or near high places and open fields, isolated trees, unprotected gazebos, rain or picnic shelters, baseball dugouts, communications towers, flagpoles, light poles, bleachers (metal or wood), metal fences, golf carts, water (ocean, lakes, swimming pools, rivers, etc.).
- If you are caught outside in a lightning storm, stay clear of trees or canopies. Crouch down, put your feet together and cover your ears to limit possible hearing damage. Keep at least 15 feet away from other people.
- Stay away from windows.
- Stay off the phone unless you need to make an emergency phone call.
- Don't shower during a thunder storm - lightning can pass through metal pipes.

Safety Guidelines

- Generally speaking, if you can see lightning and/or hear thunder, you are already at risk.
- Suspend outdoor activities whenever you see lightning or hear thunder. Avoid water, high ground, open spaces and all metal objects.
- If the time delay between seeing the flash (lightning) and hearing a thunderclap is less than 30 seconds, you should seek a safe location (see above).
- High winds, rainfall, and cloud cover often act as precursors to actual cloud-to-ground strikes.
- Many lightning casualties occur as a storm approaches, because people ignore these precursors.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after a lightning storm has passed to resume outdoor activities.

If You Are Caught Outside

- If you are unable to reach a safe building or car, knowing what to do can save your life.
- If your skin tingles or your hair stands on end, a lightning strike may be about to happen.
- Crouch down on the balls of your feet with your feet close together. Keep your hands on your knees and lower your head. Get as low as possible without touching your hands or knees to the ground. **DO NOT LIE DOWN!**
- If you are swimming, fishing or boating and there are clouds, dark skies and distant rumbles of thunder or flashes of lightning, get to land immediately and seek shelter.
- If you are in a boat and cannot get to shore, crouch down in the middle of the boat. Go below if possible.
- If you are on land, find a low spot away from trees, metal fences, pipes, tall or long objects.
- If you are in the woods, look for an area of shorter trees. Crouch down away from tree trunks.

The 30/30 Lightning Safety Rule

The "30/30" lightning safety rule is defined as the following:

- It is strongly recommended that you should seek safe shelter when you first hear thunder, observe lightning or see dark threatening clouds developing overhead. You should already be in a safe location when the time between the lightning flash and the rumble of thunder is 30 seconds or less.
- You should not resume activities until after 30 minutes after the last audible thunder.

30 seconds – 30 minutes

Generally, the lightning threat diminishes with time after the last sound of thunder, but may persist for more than 30 minutes. When thunderstorms are in the area but not overhead, the lightning threat can exist even when it is sunny and not raining.

When available, pay attention to weather warning devices such as weather radio and/or credible lightning detection systems, especially if you are a counselor, coach, lifeguard or otherwise responsible for the safety of others.

Have a lightning safety plan in place before any activity and remember evacuation times are longer for groups.