FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FLORIDA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE WEATHER SAFETY THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY WEEKEND

TALLAHASSEE—Florida’s Emergency Management officials are reminding residents and visitors to the Sunshine State to be mindful of lightning and other weather hazards when celebrating this Fourth of July weekend.

“Lightning is a serious and deadly threat, especially in Florida where thunderstorms form quickly,” said David Halstead, director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. “With a high volume of people gathering outdoors this weekend, Floridians should pay close attention to changing weather conditions and seek shelter when thunder is heard.”

Florida is the lightning capital of North America with an average of 1.4 million cloud-to-ground lightning strikes each year and typically leads the nation in lightning deaths and injuries with an average of 9 deaths and 60 injuries directly due to lightning each year. Summer is the peak season for this deadly weather phenomenon. Historically, most victims of lightning strikes are injured or killed during the summer months of June, July and August, with July recording the most deaths and injuries.

Most deaths and injuries also occur during the afternoon and early evening hours. Unfortunately, a majority of lightning casualties could have been prevented had basic safety actions been taken. Learning about lightning and its dangers as well as safety measures can greatly reduce your risk of danger.

“Perhaps the greatest lightning myth is that if it is not raining, lightning can’t strike,” said State Meteorologist Amy Godsey. “Lightning has been known to strike up to 10 miles or more away from the main thunderstorm core, and frequently occurs within 5 miles of the thunderstorm core. Although many people believe this type of lightning is rare, it occurs in virtually every thunderstorm.”

Lightning travels much faster than the sound of thunder, so get inside to a more protected structure immediately following the occurrence of any thunder and/or lightning. Remember the key phrase, "When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors". If there is no sturdy structure available, a metal car with a hard top and all windows up can be used as a shelter. Trees, tents and pavilions may help you stay dry, but will not protect you from a lightning strike.
For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN!, please visit: www.FloridaDisaster.org. Follow us on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/flsertinfo or join our blog at: http://flsertinfo.blogspot.com/.

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