



STATE OF FLORIDA

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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Lightning Safety Week is June 21-27 Emergency Managers urge Floridians to seek safe shelter during Thunderstorms

TALLAHASSEE — Floridians often think of hurricanes and tornadoes when they think of hazardous weather in the Sunshine State, but many would be surprised that, on average, lightning strikes are responsible for more weather-related deaths than all of our weather hazards combined. In 2008, 28 people died from lightning strikes nationally. This year, the recent lightning-related deaths recorded in Broward and Highlands counties, underscores the danger of this common threat.

The National Weather Service recognizes June 21-27 as **Lightning Safety Week** and officials from the Florida Division of Emergency Management urge all residents and visitors to have a plan of action for lightning conditions as they would for any other disaster.

“Lightning is a serious and deadly threat, especially in Florida where thunderstorms form quickly,” said Ruben D. Almaguer, interim director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. “Floridians should pay close attention to changing weather conditions when outdoors and seek shelter when thunder is heard.”

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors! Know the 30/30 Rule.

All thunderstorms produce lightning. Did you know that lightning can travel horizontally from thunderstorm clouds and strike as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall? Residents should know that if they hear thunder, they are in danger of being struck by lightning and should seek safe shelter immediately.

The most dangerous place to be during a thunderstorm is in an open area. Nearly half of all lightning deaths occur in open areas. Trees may offer shelter from the rain, but provide no protection from lightning. Covered picnic shelters, tents and convertibles also offer no protection from lightning. During a thunderstorm, the safest place to be is in a building, such as a home, away from the windows. Vehicles with metal roofs also provide safe shelter from lightning.

Florida emergency management officials encourage families and businesses to incorporate the “30/30 Rule” when conducting outdoor activities. This two-part rule states that people should first seek immediate shelter once the time between a lightning flash and thunder is 30 seconds or less.

The second part of this rule states that people should remain in safe shelter for 30 minutes following the final clap of thunder. Many lightning strike victims assumed that the threat had passed once a thunderstorm's rains had ended, when in fact lightning can travel far from the core of a storm's downpours.

Floridians should always be aware of weather conditions when participating in activities outdoors and have a plan in case thunderstorms develop. A portable NOAA all-hazards radio will provide weather forecast updates and can audibly alert you if a severe thunderstorm watch or warning is issued. To learn more go to www.lighningsafety.noaa.gov .

If a person is struck by lightning, call 911 and get medical help immediately. Lightning strikes can cause cardiac arrest, burns and nerve damage. Bystanders are in no danger by initiating medical aid and CPR; the victim will not carry an electrical charge. Some deaths can be prevented if the victim receives the proper first aid immediately.

For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN!, please visit: www.FloridaDisaster.org. All students, teachers and parents can find educational information and free downloadable materials on the lightning safety and the "30/30 Rule" at: www.KidsGetAPlan.com. And for the latest daily situation and flash reports go to: www.YouTube.com/FloridaSERT.

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