



STATE OF FLORIDA

# **DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 20, 2008

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## **Lighting Safety Week is June 22-28 Emergency Managers urge Floridians to seek safe shelter during Thunderstorms**

TALLAHASSEE — Though we often think of hurricanes and tornadoes when we think of hazardous weather in Florida, many people would be surprised that, on average, lightning strikes are responsible for more weather-related deaths than all of our weather hazards combined. In 2007, 10 people died from lightning strikes and the recent lightning-related death of a six-year-old girl in Liberty County underscores the danger of this common threat.

The National Weather Service recognizes June 22-28 as Lightning Safety Week and officials from the Florida Division of Emergency Management urge Floridians to have a plan of action for lightning conditions as they would for any other disaster.

“Lightning is a serious and deadly threat, especially here in Florida where severe storms can form quickly and without warning,” said Craig Fugate, Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. “Floridians should pay close attention to changing weather conditions when outdoors and seek shelter at the first sign of storms.”

All thunderstorms produce lightning. Did you know that lightning can 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 substantial building, such as a home, away from the windows. Vehicles with metal roofs also provide safe shelter from lightning.

National Weather Service and the Florida Division of Emergency Management 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.

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. Many deaths can be prevented if the victim receives proper, immediate first aid.

Floridians should always be aware of weather conditions when participating in activities outdoors and have a plan in case of severe weather. A portable NOAA all-hazards radio can provide alerts in case a severe thunderstorm watch or warning is issued.

For more information on disasters, and to find out how you can *Get a Plan!* for disaster preparedness, visit [www.FloridaDisaster.org](http://www.FloridaDisaster.org).

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