

Columbia/Boone County
Office of Emergency Management
2201 I-70 Drive Northwest
Columbia, MO 65202



News Release

Contact: Scott Olsen, Interim OEM Director
573-447-5000

June 13, 2012

BE AWARE OF LIGHTNING DANGERS

As we enter into June, the Columbia/Boone County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) reminds residents that one of the deadliest dangers posed by severe weather during the summer comes from lightning.

“While wind, hail, and tornadoes usually grab most of the headlines in severe weather, lightning can be just as dangerous,” says Interim OEM Director Scott Olsen. “On average, 62 people are killed each year in the United States by lightning. Missouri has recorded sixteen deaths over the past ten years. Lightning is just as dangerous as any other feature of severe weather.”

According to figures from the National Weather Service (NWS), 73% of lightning-related injuries and deaths occur during the months of June, July and August. Although some victims are struck directly by the lightning discharge, many are struck as the current moves in and along the ground.



Lightning Safety Tips

(Information supplied by the National Weather Service)

- ***Watch for Developing Thunderstorms:*** Thunderstorms are most likely to develop on spring or summer days but can occur year round. As the sun heats the air, pockets of warmer air start to rise. Continued heating can cause these clouds to grow vertically into towering cumulus clouds, often the first sign of a developing thunderstorm.
- ***An Approaching Thunderstorm: When to Seek Safe Shelter:*** Lightning can strike as far as 10 miles from area where it is raining. That's about the distance you can hear thunder. **If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance. Seek safe shelter immediately.**
- ***Outdoor Activities: Minimize the Risk of Being Struck:*** Most lightning deaths and injuries occur in the summer. Where organized outdoor sports activities take place, coaches, camp counselors and other adults must stop activities at the first roar of thunder to ensure everyone time to get a large building or enclosed vehicle. Leaders of outdoors events should have a written plan that all staff are aware of and enforce.
- ***Indoor Activities: Things to Avoid:*** Inside building, stay off corded phones, computers and other electrical equipment that put you in direct contact with electricity. Stay away from pools, indoor or outdoor, tubs, showers and other plumbing. Buy surge suppressors for key equipment. When inside, wait 30 minutes after the last strike, before going out again.
- ***Helping a Lightning Strike Victim:*** If a person is struck by lightning, call 911 and get medical care immediately. Cardiac arrest and irregularities, burns, and nerve damage are common in cases where people are struck by lightning. However, with proper treatment, including CPR if necessary, most victims survive a lightning strike. You are in no danger helping a lightning victim. The charge will not affect you.
- ***Summary:*** Lightning is dangerous. With common sense, you can greatly increase your safety and the safety of those you are with. At the first clap of thunder, go a large building or fully enclosed vehicle and wait 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder before you to back outside.