



LIGHTNING

The following are only guidelines. Lightning can be very inconsistent.

Know what to do in a thunderstorm:

- * Take cover indoors whenever possible.
- * Stay out of doorways and away from windows with aluminum frames.
- * Avoid trees. Lightning often hits trees, travels down the trunk and may explode the bark. The charge then spreads out on the ground.
- * Go to a low lying area; brush is better than trees because it has "dispersed streamers," which do not act as lightning rods. Stay off the ridges and peaks of mountains, roofs, or towers of building.
- * Get off machinery; turn off machines (a gas engine is less attractive to lightning than an electric engine).
- * Take cover in a metal topped vehicle when it's not possible to go inside a building. Do not touch any metal parts of the vehicles. The rubber tires do **not** provide protection from lightning (nor do rubber soled shoes).
- * Turn off your electronic devices (radios, microwaves, televisions) and avoid actions that would generate static.
- * Use surge protectors on electrical devices.
- * Make your body a single point on the ground by putting your ankles and knees together and then crouching down. This posture lessens your chances of being a lightning rod and having a charge enter one foot from the ground, travel through your vital organs and then exiting through your other foot. Another suggested position is to drop to your knees and bend forward, putting your hands on your knees. Do not lie flat on the ground because electrical current from a strike can easily travel through your vital organs this way, too.
- * Get away from other people. This will lessen the target size.
- * Get away from rocks and boulder fields. If you are hiking or camping get off the rocks. Lightning tends to travel the route of least resistance, and water is a great from the ground to the sky (as in trees, our bodies are 70% water). Rocks don't hold much water so your body would become the conductor.

- * Aluminum and fiberglass poles will conduct electricity (keep in mind when skiing, tent camping, leaning on fences and fishing). Carbon fiber is better. Stay away from metal objects and tall objects such as telephone poles, light standards and antennas.
- * If you are in the water, count between a lightning strike and thunder; if your count is less than ten get out of the water and to safety immediately. Remember, water is a perfect conductor. Since lightning moves at 4 to 5 seconds per mile, a ten count means that the lightning is two miles away.
- * The largest percentage of lightning strikes of trees were found to have been on subalpine firs which are tall, often single, at high elevation, on rocks and have a low moisture content. Do not seek them for cover.
- * If your hair stands on end take safety action immediately. A lightning strike could be eminent. You are charged up and ready to go; a perfect target.
- * Get rid of metal objects. Your radio, wheelchair, baseball cap (with metal rivet around the hole at the top), your keys and knife.
- * If you are on a horse, get off. Separate. The horse may have metal shoes, bit, and rigging in the saddle. (If you have time, unsaddle your friend and put him in the brush).
- * Lightning can happen in snow, rain, hail, and dust; static occurs where there is turbulence, then it looks for a good target of least resistance to discharge its voltage.
- * Make certain you stay under cover until the danger has passed. Just because the rain may have stopped does not mean that the lightning is over.
- * Err on the side of being very conservative. Most of us have just been lucky so far... take defensive action.

THINK AHEAD AND GET TO SAFE AREAS BEFORE THE STORM HITS!

- ❖ **As an added precaution...**remove any metal accessories, such as belts and watches, and hang metal tools in trees away from you. If a storm occurs suddenly insulate yourself from the ground using a rubber pad or other equipment without metal. Remember - distance yourself from metal objects.