



Press Release

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IEMA, National Weather Service Remind People, “When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors”

Lightning Safety Awareness Week is June 24-30

SPRINGFIELD – No matter where you live or travel in Illinois, it’s easy to find a seemingly endless array of outdoor activities during the summer months. Whether your plans call for catching a baseball game, hitting the links or attending an outdoor festival or fair, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the National Weather Service (NWS) want you and your family to stay safe when lightning threatens your summer fun.

The two agencies are reminding people, “When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors,” as part of national Lightning Safety Awareness Week June 24-30.

“Illinois’ warm summers are perfect for outdoor events and activities, but they also can aid in the development of thunderstorms,” said IEMA Director Jonathon Monken. “We want people to enjoy summer to its fullest, and remembering ‘When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors’ can keep your summer fun from ending in tragedy.”

According to the NWS, an average of 55 people are killed by lightning each year in the United States. In addition, it’s estimated that more than 1,000 people are injured by lightning strikes in the nation each year. A majority of victims were either outdoors in an open area or taking part in an activity near the water such as fishing, tubing or swimming.

"There are three steps to increase your lightning safety. First, know your risk by avoiding the threat. Check the forecast regularly and keep an eye on the sky so you do not get caught outdoors in a storm," said Chris Miller, warning coordination meteorologist with the NWS Lincoln office. "Secondly, take action. When you hear a rumble of thunder or see a flash of lightning, get indoors or into a hard-topped vehicle with the windows closed. Finally, let others know about the threat. Contact family members and friends on their mobile devices if you know they are outdoors and a thunderstorm is nearby."

While less than 10 percent of people who are struck by lightning are killed, many lightning strike survivors suffer various degrees of disability. Only a few lightning strike victims actually suffer burns, and these are usually minor. However, many lightning strike survivors are left with debilitating life-long effects, including memory loss, personality changes, fatigue, irreparable nerve damage, chronic pain and/or headaches, difficulty sleeping and dizziness.

IEMA and the NWS offer the following tips for staying safe when thunderstorms approach:

Outdoor lightning safety tips:

- No place outside is safe when thunderstorms are in the area.
- If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike you.
- When you hear thunder, immediately move to a safe shelter.
- Safe shelter is a substantial building or inside an enclosed, hard-topped vehicle.
- Stay in the safe shelter at least 30 minutes after you hear the last clap of thunder.

If there is no safe shelter anywhere nearby:

- Seek lower elevation areas.
- Never use a tree for shelter.
- Immediately get out and away from pools, lakes and other bodies of water.
- Stay away from all metallic objects (fences, power lines, poles, etc.).
- Do not raise umbrellas or golf clubs above you.

People shouldn't hesitate to help someone who has been struck by lightning since victims do not carry an electrical charge. The surge of electricity through a lightning victim's body causes cardiac arrest in most fatalities, so immediate medical attention is critical. If the victim doesn't have a pulse and isn't breathing, CPR should be administered immediately.

For additional tips on lightning safety visit the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov or contact IEMA at 217-785-9925.