

### LIGHTNING SAFETY AWARENESS

During the spring and summer months, thunderstorms become more prevalent in our area. Thunderstorm can produce strong winds, various sizes of hail, intense rainfall that can cause flash flooding, and dangerous lightning strikes. While the odds of being struck by lightning are very low, fatalities caused by lightning strikes do occur each year within the United States.



### LIGHTNING FATALITIES

The Lightning Safety Council is promoting *National Lightning Safety Awareness Week*, which lands on June 18 - 24 this year. National Lightning Safety Awareness Week was started in 2001 and has helped bring the average number of lightning fatalities in the U.S. from over 50 to under 30 as of 2020. There are currently 4 lightning strike fatalities in 2023. For more information visit their website here: <http://lightningsafetycouncil.org>.



### FIVE WAYS LIGHTING STRIKES PEOPLE

The National Weather Service shares the following five ways that lightning can strike people. For more information, visit their website here: <https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-struck>

**Direct Strike:** These strikes occur most often when a person is in an open area. In this case, the person is struck directly and becomes a part of the main lightning discharge channel. These are not as common as the other types of strikes, but are potentially the most deadly.

**Side Flash:** A side flash, or side splash, happens when lightning strikes a taller object near someone and part of the current jumps from the object to the person. This generally happens when the person is two to three feet from the object. In most cases, this happens when people take shelter under a tree to avoid rain or hail from a storm.

**Conduction:** As chaotic as lightning can appear, it does like to follow a path. This channeling of energy through materials is known as conduction. While metal does not necessarily attract lightning, it does provide a route for it to travel long distances. Conduction can occur indoors and outdoors. Indoor injuries can occur while touching plumbing, metal surfaces or wires when lightning strikes.

**Streamers:** A cloud-to-ground lightning strike starts within a storm as a negatively charged electrical channel called a “stepped leader”. The stepped leader emerges from the bottom of the cloud and its negative charge attracts vast amounts of positive charge from the surface. The electrical channels coming up from the ground to the leader are known as streamers. A person can be struck by one of those streamers, which can cause injury or death.

**Ground Current:** When lightning strikes an object, much of the energy will travel outward from the strike in and along the ground surface. Anyone standing outside near a lightning strike can become injured or killed by the strike's ground current. Due to the potential size of the affected area, this type of strike causes the greatest number of deaths and injuries.

#### References

**Lightning Safety Council** (2023). Lightning Safety. Retrieved from: <http://lightningsafetycouncil.org/>

**National Weather Service (NWS)** (n.d.). Lightning Science: Five Ways Lightning Strikes People. Retrieved from: <https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-struck>