

Lightning Safety Awareness

Since the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS) initiated a nationwide effort to raise awareness to the dangers of lightning in 2001, the number of deaths due to lightning has dropped significantly across the United States.

When the campaign began in 2001, the U.S. averaged 73 deaths per year based on a 30-year average (1971-2000). As of 2015, that 30-year average had dropped to 49 deaths per year. Even more notable is the fact that the U.S. has averaged only 26 deaths per year in the last 5 years. Based on this reduction in lightning fatalities, more than 150 lives have been saved since the campaign began in 2001.

Much of the credit for the success of the lightning safety campaign is due to many people and organizations that have contributed to this life-saving effort. These include NWS offices across the country and our many partners in the broadcast and print media, outdoor and sports organizations, emergency management officials, and other safety organizations.

While we're very encouraged by the reduction in lightning fatalities, there are still far too many people that take unnecessary risks when thunderstorms are in the area and put themselves in a dangerous and potentially deadly situation. Since the campaign began in 2001, about 500 people in the U.S. have been killed by lightning and thousands more that have been injured. Some of the survivors are forced to cope with life-long neurological problems.

This year's campaign will not only emphasize personal safety, but also what can be done to minimize lightning damage to property. The primary focus of this year's campaign will be on building lightning-safe communities. Across the U.S., lightning is responsible for an estimated 23,000 fires including almost 6000 home or structure fires. In addition, electrical surges from nearby lightning strikes are responsible for damaging electrical and electronic equipment in homes and businesses across the country. All totaled, lightning causes an estimated \$1 billion in damage in the U.S. each year.

Remember, all thunderstorms contain dangerous lightning. Don't take unnecessary risks when thunderstorms are in your area. When thunder roars, go indoors.