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Public Information Statement
National Weather Service Headquarters Washington DC
250 PM EDT Thu Jun 16 2011

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From: Donna Franklin
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Subject: 2011 National Lightning Safety Awareness Week Campaign: June 20-26 2011

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors

NWS will host its 11th annual lightning safety awareness week campaign June 19-25 2011. The NOAA Lightning Safety website has some new features including a blog by NWS Lightning Safety Expert John Jensenius, a widget, links to relevant news stories, a new Leon poster, updated statistics, and lots of new animations that illustrate how lightning works.

Most lightning strike victims are close to safe shelter but wait too long to get there. The campaign emphasizes that no place outside is safe when lightning is in the area. If you can hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike you. "When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors is the new NWS motto."

Since the campaign started 10 year ago, the average number of deaths has dropped from 73 to 55 per year. While this trend is impressive, there are still too many deaths and injuries. Each year, hundreds of people are injured, many with permanent nerve damage, hearing loss and other serious side effects.

In the United States, lightning deaths and injuries occur most frequently in open areas. Lightning safety is crucial when you are outdoors, especially since so many activities take place in open areas like athletic fields, golf courses and beaches. When outdoors, if you hear thunder, immediately seek shelter in a fully enclosed building with plumbing or electricity or in a hard-topped vehicle. There is no safe place outdoors.

People are particularly vulnerable to lightning strikes when a storm is approaching or exiting the area. Lightning can strike more than 10 miles away from a thunderstorm.

Statistics, brochures, multimedia, posters and more are available on the NWS Lightning Safety website at:

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov>

The site has pages geared to the needs of teachers, children, those conducting outreach efforts, the media and Spanish speakers. There is a wealth of information about lightning safety, science and medical concerns.

Lightning Safety Tips:

1. Keep an eye on the sky. Look for darkening skies, flashes of lightning or increasing wind, which may be signs of an approaching thunderstorm. Get to a safe shelter immediately if a thunderstorm approaches. Coaches and other leaders should listen to NOAA Weather Radio during practice sessions and games for the latest forecasts and warnings.
2. Postpone or halt outdoor activities before the rain begins. Many people take shelter from the rain, but most people struck by lightning are not in the rain. Go quickly to a completely enclosed building with plumbing and electricity, not a carport, open garage, dugout or covered patio. If no enclosed building is nearby, get inside a hard-topped all-metal vehicle and remain there until 30 minutes after the last thunder clap.
3. Stay away from trees, sheds, picnic shelters, bleachers, beaches and open fields. Keep twice as far away from a tree as it is tall. Also, stay away from clotheslines, fences, exposed sheds and electrically conductive elevated objects.
4. Get out of the water. Stay off the beach and out of small boats or canoes. If caught in a boat, crouch down in the center away from metal hardware. Swimming, wading and snorkeling are not safe during a thunderstorm. Lightning can strike the water and travel miles from its point of contact. Even standing in puddles can be dangerous.

For more information, contact:

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