

Colorado Lightning Safety Awareness Week continues through Saturday. Today we discuss the lightning threat across the Centennial State.

The NOAA Lightning Safety webpage ([weather.gov/safety/lightning](https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning)) shows that the continental United States averages about 21 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes per year, and each one of these flashes is a potential threat to both life and property. During the past 30 years, 39 people on average have been killed in the United States, while during the past 10 years the average number of lightning fatalities has been 25. In 2020, seventeen people in the United States were killed by lightning, while many others were injured. All of the people who were killed by lightning in 2020 were involved in outdoor activities.

The Colorado Lightning Resource webpage ([weather.gov/pub/lightning](https://www.weather.gov/pub/lightning)) shows that there was one lightning fatality in Colorado in 2020, while 2 people were injured. Since 1980, on average, Colorado has had 2 lightning fatalities and 12 injuries. Since 1980, El Paso County, including the Colorado Springs metro area, has had the dubious distinction of having the most lightning casualties of any county in Colorado, with 10 fatalities and 84 injuries. Larimer County has had 10 fatalities and 76 injuries, while Jefferson County has had 9 fatalities and 38 injuries.

Many people who were struck by lightning in Colorado did not react in a timely manner to protect themselves. The reason for this is they likely did not comprehend the dangers associated with the lightning threat.

To prevent yourself (and your family and friends) from becoming a victim of a lightning strike, you first need to become aware of the situations that put you at risk of being struck by lightning, and secondly, what you can do to reduce the lightning strike risk. While nearly all people take protective actions when rain, hail and wind are occurring, many leave themselves vulnerable to being struck by lightning as thunderstorms approach, move overhead and then move away.

Lightning can strike more than 10 miles from the rain area of a thunderstorm. That distance is about as far as you can hear thunder. If you can hear thunder, you could be in danger of being struck by lightning. When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!

Most lightning fatalities and injuries in Colorado occur during the afternoon when lightning is most likely to develop, and when people are more likely to be outside. Studies have shown that quite a few people have been killed by lightning when little or no rain is falling.

What are the chances of you being injured or killed by lightning in any given year in the United States? The NOAA Lightning Safety webpage estimates it is about 1/1,222,000. However, your chance of being struck will depend on whether you consistently practice all the lightning safety rules.

Lightning starts about one quarter of the forest and rangeland wildfires across the state. Colorado averages around 2500 wildfires each year. Many of these lightning caused fires occur with very little or no rain. These storms often generate gusty winds, which can fan the flames of the fire.

During this Lightning Safety Awareness Week, the National Weather Service will provide a variety of information on lightning in Colorado.

On Tuesday, the science of lightning will be discussed.

On Wednesday, the topic of the day is outdoor lightning risk reduction.

On Thursday, we will have information on indoor lightning safety.

On Friday, information for lightning strike survivors will be provided.

On Saturday, lightning and wildfire information will be available.

When planning outdoor activities, check out the hazardous weather outlook and the latest forecast, which include thunderstorm and lightning potential. Make sure you get the specific forecast information for the location you will be visiting. The web sites for National Weather Service offices which cover Colorado and issue these products are...

Denver/Boulder...[weather.gov/bou](http://weather.gov/bou)  
Grand Junction....[weather.gov/gjt](http://weather.gov/gjt)  
Pueblo.....[weather.gov/pub](http://weather.gov/pub)  
Goodland.....[weather.gov/gld](http://weather.gov/gld)

NOAA's lightning website which contains abundant information on lightning safety can be found at:

[weather.gov/safety/lightning](http://weather.gov/safety/lightning)

Lightning information specific for the State of Colorado can be found at the following website:

[weather.gov/pub/lightning](http://weather.gov/pub/lightning)

The lightning topic for tomorrow will be the science of lightning.