



# Lightning Safety & Awareness

National Weather Service  
Springfield, Missouri



**When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!** - Lightning kills over 50 people in the U.S. each year and inflicts life-long debilitating injuries on hundreds more. Go inside if you hear thunder, but keep away from corded telephones, electrical appliances, and plumbing. Lightning is the second greatest cause of storm-related deaths in the U.S., killing more than tornadoes or hurricanes. Lightning also inflicts life-long debilitating injuries on many more than it kills. **NO PLACE OUTSIDE IS SAFE NEAR A THUNDERSTORM!** Learn more at [www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov).

**Lightning Statistics** - According to statistics kept by the National Weather Service, the 30 year average for lightning fatalities across the country is 61. Lightning usually claims only one or two victims at a time, and because lightning does not cause mass destruction, such as from a tornado event or a hurricane, lightning generally receives much less attention than the more destructive storm-related events. Due to under reporting, it is estimated that, more realistically, about 100 - 120 deaths per year occur because of lightning. Documented lightning injuries in the United States average 300 per year; however undocumented lightning injuries are likely much higher. In Missouri there have been 97 deaths attributed to lightning from 1959 - 2011, an average of 2 deaths per year. There were 3 fatalities in Missouri in 2011.

**Safe Vehicles** - A **safe vehicle** is any fully enclosed metal-topped vehicle such as a hard-topped car, minivan, bus, truck, etc. While inside a safe vehicle, do not use electronic devices such as radio communications during a thunderstorm. If you drive into a thunderstorm, slow down and use extra caution. If possible, pull off the road into a safe area. Do not leave the vehicle during a thunderstorm. **Unsafe vehicles** include convertibles, golf carts, riding mowers, open cab construction equipment and boats without cabins.

**Bolts from the Blue** - A lightning flash can travel horizontally many miles away from the thunderstorm and then strike the ground. These types of lightning flashes are called "[Bolts from the Blue](#)" because they seem to come out of a clear blue sky. While blue sky may exist overhead (or in part of the sky overhead) a thunderstorm is always located 5 to 10 miles (and sometimes even farther) away. Although these flashes are rare, they have caused fatalities.

**Outdoors, Camping, Floating, At the Lake** - If you are at the lake, and you hear thunder, what should you do? Go to your car! Do NOT seek shelter under the picnic shelters or in a tent. These are not safe places. Wait 30 minutes until after the last rumble of thunder before going back to the lake.

---

## Lightning Safety Resources

---

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

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/lightning/resources/lightning-safety.pdf>

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/>



Building a Weather-Ready Nation