



## *News Release*

*A program of the Energy Education Council*

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**When thunder roars, go indoors!**

### ***Lightning Safety Awareness focus of national observance June 19-25***

(West Point, NE)—With record numbers of tornados and severe storms thus far in 2011, deaths and injuries from lightning strikes have also been on the rise. Cuming County Public Power District and Safe Electricity urges everyone: when thunder roars, go indoors, and to learn from the experience of others.

Alex Lambson and Dane Zdunich were lucky to survive a lightning strike, although both were diagnosed as clinically dead for a half hour before being revived. The St. George, Utah, teenagers were awaiting a ride home from school in October 2010 when a lightning bolt came out of a clear sky and struck them. Both suffered deadly shock, burns, and other injuries, but thanks to the CPR efforts of a teacher, both lived to tell of their good fortune.

Dawn Yoder of Atmore, Alabama, was not as lucky. She stepped outside her home in July of 2009, was struck by lightning, and died of her injuries two days later. Another lightning bolt flashed at a ball park in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in June of 2009, killing a 12 year old boy and leaving his 11 year old teammate in critical condition.

Summer is the peak season for lightning strikes, and Safe Electricity joins the National Weather Service in urging everyone to observe Lightning Awareness Week June 19-25. The goal is to increase awareness about the tragic loss of life and debilitating injuries that result from being struck by lightning and how to stay safe from lightning.

The National Weather Service says lightning fatalities average 58 per year, with permanent injuries to hundreds of others. More than 300 people were injured by lightning in 2008 alone. With an estimated 25 million lightning flashes annually in the US, a great potential exists for casualties. Protect yourself and your family from lightning with a safe storm strategy:

- Be aware of weather forecasts and watch for developing thunderstorms, which occur in greater frequency in spring and summer. As the air is heated by the sun, energy is created with air

movement, and lightning typically comes from towering storm clouds. But as the Utah teens found out, that is not always the case.

- Lightning can strike many miles ahead of a storm front. If you hear thunder, seek shelter immediately, because that indicates lightning is within 10 miles of you. If you are outside, go inside a building. If you are at a park, do not seek shelter at an open pavilion. A building is safest.
- Lightning will typically seek something tall, such as a tree, building, or flagpole, but can also strike at lower objects. That was the case at Kenosha, Wisconsin in March of 2011, when 7 deer were grazing in an open field and were killed by a lightning strike. There have been reports of livestock huddling under a tree during a storm and being fatally injured when lightning hit the tree. Do not seek shelter under trees, and if you detect a tingling sensation, crouch to a low position with your head between your knees to reduce your height.
- If you are inside a building, the National Weather Service advises you to stay off corded telephones, or away from any electrical device that could carry an electrical surge if lightning were carried into your home through wiring. Turn off or unplug such appliances, stay away from television sets, and do not depend on surge protectors to absorb a lightning strike. Conductors can also include the plumbing in your house.
- Since water is an excellent conductor of electricity, lightning is particularly dangerous for anyone in a swimming pool or engaged in water recreation. Swimmers, boaters, fishermen, and others on lakes and rivers should seek shelter if storms are threatening and lightning is seen or thunder is heard. Authorities warn against outdoor activity until 30 minutes after the last clasp of thunder is heard.

If a person is struck by lightning, call 911 and care for the victim immediately. You are not in danger of being electrocuted by the victim. More information on lightning safety can be found at [www.ccppd.com](http://www.ccppd.com) or [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org) or [www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov).