

For: Immediate Release

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WHEN THUNDER ROARS, ALWAYS GO INDOORS!

DECATUR, GA: Most people know to take shelter when they see lightning. However, the problem is that by the time you actually SEE lightning, it could be too late. Nearly 58 deaths and numerous injuries occur each year in the U.S. from people being harmed by lightning.

The DeKalb County Board of Health encourages residents that “*when thunder roars, always go indoors!*” If everyone takes this simple action each time they hear thunder, rather than wait until lightning or rain strikes, they can reduce serious injuries and deaths.

Below are some other useful tips for staying safe during a lightning storm.

Step 1 – Remain indoors in a safe building

Encourage family members to come in from outdoor activities such as bike riding, mowing the lawn or swimming in the pool when they hear thunder. If you hear thunder, you are in range for a lightning strike. You need to seek shelter immediately if you are outside. Lightning can travel 10-12 miles ahead of a storm and seem to come out of a clear blue sky. Persons should remain indoors during a lightning storm for 30 minutes until after the storm has passed before going back outside.

- Safe buildings are fully enclosed with a roof, walls and floor, such as a home, school, office building or shopping center.
- Unsafe buildings are picnic shelters, tents, sheds, greenhouses, dugouts and other partially open or small structures.

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Step 2 - Unplug electrical devices

Always unplug electrical devices such as televisions and computers ahead of time. If the storm blows up suddenly, leave the plugged-in items alone. Do not use the land-line telephone or electrical appliances including computers. Lightning may strike outside lines and travel inside. It is not safe to attempt unplugging them during a lightning storm. Also, install power surge protectors for your home electrical devices.

Step 3 - Finding safety outdoors when lightning strikes

Avoid standing near or seeking shelter under tall objects such as trees and poles. These tall objects can actually draw lightning. When a tree is struck by lightning, the current travels to the ground around the tree. If you are standing near the tree or under it, you can still be charged with current even if you are not touching the tree.

Step 4: Seek lower ground when outdoors

If you cannot find shelter, crouch down in a catcher's stance. The lower to the ground you are, the safer you are from lightning. The best position to take is to squat down on the ground and cover your ears or put your hands on your knees. This will lessen your chances of being struck by an electrical current. If other people are with you, stay 15 feet apart.

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Step 5: Take off metal items when outdoors

If you are wearing jewelry, take it off. Metal objects such as gold and silver can attract electricity. Remove all jewelry and set it aside and away from you until the storm has passed.

Do not carry or hold tall metal objects during thunderstorms. Do not hold any items in your hand that adds height. Items such as umbrellas and golf clubs with metal components can draw electrical current. Put these items down and away from you until the storm has passed. Drop any golf clubs, fishing poles, or baseball bats. Remove metal objects such as a baseball helmet.

Step 6: Remain in a safe vehicle

A safe vehicle is a hard-topped car, SUV, minivan, or bus. Soft-topped convertibles are not safe. If you seek shelter in your car, make sure all doors are closed and windows rolled up. Do not touch any metal surfaces.

If you're driving when a thunderstorm starts, pull off the roadway to the side of the road, if possible to do so. A lightning flash hitting the vehicle could startle you and cause temporary blindness, especially at night. NEVER use cell phones, Blue Tooth attachments, iPods or MP3 type players during a lightning storm.

The simple safety slogan of the National Lightning Safety Institute is this: **If you can see it** (lightning), **flee it** (take shelter). **If you can hear it** (thunder), **clear it** (stop your activities).

For more information about lightning safety, visit www.dekalbhealth.net or <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/thunderstorm/index.shtm>