

Lightning: The Underrated Killer

If you see it: clear it; if you hear it: flee it!

Lightning Occurrence

In the US; 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes each year. Lightning fascinates but is lethal.

During the past 30 years lightning killed 93 people per year on average. That is only the documented cases. Undocumented cases number, in some estimates, perhaps 300 hundred, or higher. Yet these statistics are deceiving.

10% of those struck die. Obviously, the other 90% survive. But how well are they? Survivors' injuries are as subtle as they are cruel. Often debilitating after-effects devastate the victims. They suffer neurological damage. Many do not realize the residual, crippling effects, until years later. These statistics are unavailable.

Outdoor Activities

Organized sports activities bring people to the outdoors where these lightning incidents take place. This is especially so in good weather and in the summer. Coaches, umpires, camp counselors and referees need to be forewarned to take care of their charges, in this context. They can do so, by stopping activities sooner, when the danger is pending-but not necessarily obvious. It is their duty to cease activities. Get people to proper shelter. And quickly.

Thunder on the horizon - What to Do?

Lightning is generated, connected to a thundercloud. Be warned: it may strike many miles from an epicenter of thunderstorm activity. Many sources quote that lightning has struck from as far as 10 miles away. Others say risk is up to 25 miles away, from the rain area:

Lightning can kill suddenly.

That first strike is just as deadly as subsequent bolts. Ten (10) miles is about the distance you can hear the thunder clap. So if you can hear, it can get you. It can strike! Once is always. Sometimes forever.

There is no safe haven when "outside."