

AS QUICK AS A FLASH!

Lightning is static electric charge that builds up in clouds. A negative charge builds up in the clouds as a result of friction between the air and water particles in the clouds. When the potential energy (or stored energy) is large enough, it discharges towards the positively-charged Earth. The result ... FLASH!!

Lightning is one of nature's most recurrent and common spectacles. Around the world, there are over 3 000 000 flashes every day. That's around 44 strikes every second.

THE GOLDEN RULE

TO TELL HOW FAR AWAY A THUNDERSTORM IS, SIMPLY COUNT THE NUMBER OF SECONDS BETWEEN THE FLASH OF LIGHTNING AND THE BOOM OF THUNDER THAT FOLLOWS.

If it is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is close enough to be dangerous – seek shelter.

If you want to work out roughly how close it is – divide this number by three for the distance in kilometres.

KEEP SAFE!

- The safest place to be during a lightning storm is indoors.
- Keep away from windows and electrical equipment and avoid using a landline telephone.
- Using wireless devices such as cell phones or cordless phones indoors during a lightning storm is generally safe, but better to avoid using.
- Do not bath or shower during storms.
- If you are outside, try to find shelter in a closed building. Stay away from trees, metal fences or tall objects.
- Crouch down on the balls of your feet and keep your head and arms tucked in - make yourself as small as possible.
- Almost 90% of all lightning strike victims survive. The odds of being struck multiple times is even less, with the record being seven times in one lifetime.

TYPES OF STRIKES

- **Direct strike:** A cloud-to-ground lightning strike hits you or something you're holding, like a golf club or phone. This is the worst strike!
- **Side flash:** Lightning strikes something close to where you are standing and then jumps from that to you.
- **Contact potential:** While you're touching something, like a fence post or a tree, lightning strikes that object and the current travels from the object through the point of contact into your body.
- **Surge voltage:** While you're using some type of electrical appliance or a telephone, lightning strikes the source of power or network connected to the device and you receive a shock. This is the least dangerous as the electricity is dispersed elsewhere.

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