

Lightning Myths VS. Facts

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-myths>

Myth: If you're caught outside during a thunderstorm, you should crouch down to reduce your risk of being struck.

Fact: Crouching doesn't make you any safer outdoors. Run to a substantial building or hard-topped vehicle. If you are too far to run to one of these options, you have no good alternative. You are NOT safe anywhere outdoors.

Myth: Lightning never strikes the same place twice.

Fact: Lightning often strikes the same place repeatedly, especially if it's a tall, pointy, isolated object. The Empire State Building is hit an average of 23 times a year

Myth: Rubber tires on a car protect you from lightning by insulating you from the ground.

Fact: Most cars are safe from lightning, but it is the metal roof and metal sides that protect you, NOT the rubber tires. Remember, convertibles, motorcycles, bicycles, open-shelled outdoor recreational vehicles & cars with fiberglass shells offer no protection from lightning. When lightning strikes a vehicle, it goes through the metal frame into the ground. Don't lean on doors during a thunderstorm.

Odds of being struck in any given year: 1/1.2 million

Odds of being struck in your lifetime (Est. 80 year): 1/15,300

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-odds>



Lightning

Get Inside

“When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!” ~ Natl. Oceanic & Atmospheric Assoc.

The summer storm season is here, and with it comes lightning. Every year, there are over 25 million instances of cloud-to-ground lightning, over 300 people are struck by lightning and roughly 50 of those strikes are fatalities. Unfortunately, most of these incidences could have been avoided with a little bit of planning and preparation.

First, employers and workers should know the risks associated with lightning, and always check the weather and forecast before beginning work outside. If there are signs of an approaching thunderstorm, do not start work that puts employees at a greater risk of being struck, or that can't be quickly and safely stopped. Some common examples to avoid include: working from boom/scissor lifts, working on or near metal structures, working in or around water, working in open fields with no shelter available, roof work, plumbing/pipefitting, working from scaffolding, and heavy equipment operation.

Shelter from lightning must always be considered when planning work. Per NOAA, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association, sheltering inside a building is the safest option. At the first sign of lightning, including hearing thunder, workers should seek shelter and remain there for at least 30 minutes after hearing the last sound of thunder.

But what if all you have is a vehicle?

If a suitable building is not available, workers should seek shelter inside a hard-top metal vehicle with the windows rolled up (sorry, no convertibles). Again, wait for at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.

Being caught outdoors during a thunderstorm is a worst-case scenario; there is nothing you can do to prevent being struck by lightning. It is imperative to plan for shelter and get inside. If you are caught, follow NOAA's recommendations to lower your risk of being struck:

- Lightning is more likely to strike the tallest object around; do not be the tallest object
- Avoid isolated trees, hilltops, power poles, cranes, large equipment, scaffolding, and rooftops
- Avoid open areas & do not lie flat on the ground
- Retreat to low-lying areas, or patches of small trees surrounded by larger ones
- Avoid water, and get out of and away from bodies of water
- Avoid wiring, plumbing, and fencing.
- Avoid sheds, pavilions, and tents; they are more likely to attract lightning and offer no path to the ground for the lightning

Finally, remember that commercial lightning detection devices and services have no way to warn against the first lightning strike. They only detect the first strike and then warn against successive strikes.