



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Ten Lightning Myths



1. MYTH: Lightning Never Strikes The Same Place Twice

TRUTH: Lightning often strikes the same place repeatedly, especially if it's a tall isolated object. The Empire State Building used to be used as a lightning laboratory, since it is hit nearly 25 times a year.

2. MYTH: If It's Not Raining, I'm Safe From Lightning

TRUTH: Lightning often strikes over three miles from the thunderstorm, far outside the rain. 'Bolts From The Blue', though infrequent, can strike 10-15 Miles from the thunderstorm. Anvil lightning can strike the ground over 50 Miles from the thunderstorm. Lightning in clouds has traveled over 100 miles from the thunderstorm.

3. MYTH: Lightning Can't Strike If Clouds Aren't Overhead

TRUTH: Same as above. Where do you think the term 'Bolt From The Blue' came from.

4. MYTH: Rubber Tires Protect You From Lightning In A Car By Insulating You From The Ground

TRUTH: Lightning laughs at two inches of rubber! Most cars are reasonably safe from lightning. But it's the metal roof and metal sides that protect you, not the rubber tires. Thus, convertibles, motorcycles, bicycles, and cars with plastic or fiberglass shells offer no lightning protection. And don't even ask about sneakers!

5. MYTH: A Lightning Victim Is Electrified. If You Touch Them, You'll Be Electrocuted.

TRUTH: The human body doesn't store electricity. It is perfectly safe to touch a lightning victim to give them first aid. This is the most chilling of lightning myths. Imagine someone dying needlessly, for want of simple CPR, when their chance of survival was 90%!

6. MYTH: If Outside In A Thunderstorm, Go Under A Tree To Stay Dry

TRUTH: Being under trees is the third leading activity for lightning casualties - enough said?

7. MYTH: I'm In A House, I'm Safe From Lightning

TRUTH: While a house is a good place for lightning safety, just going inside isn't enough. You must also avoid any conducting path leading outside, such as corded telephones, plumbing, electrical appliances, wires, TV cables, metal doors or window frames, etc. Don't stand near a window to watch the lightning. An inside room is best.

8. MYTH: When Playing Sports And Thunderstorms Threaten, It's Okay To Finish The Game Before Seeking Shelter

TRUTH: Sports is the activity with the fastest rising rate of lightning casualties. No game is worth a life or life-long severe injury. All people associated with sports should have a lightning safety plan and use it. Seek shelter immediately when lightning threatens.

9. MYTH: If Lightning Is About To Strike, Lie Flat On The Ground

TRUTH: This advice is decades out of date. Better advice is to use the 'Lightning Crouch': put your feet together, squat low, tuck your head, and cover your ears. Lightning induces electric currents along the top of the ground that can be deadly over 100 Feet away. While lying flat on the ground gets you as low as possible, which is good, it increases your chance of being hit by a ground current, which is bad. The best combination of being low and touching the ground as little as possible, is the 'Lightning Crouch'.

10. MYTH: Lightning Is Instant Death From The Sky That'll Turn You Into A Charcoaled Corpse

TRUTH: Maybe people have been watching too many Coyote/Roadrunner cartoons. Lightning often will leave surface burns to the skin, but won't turn you into charcoal, let alone disintegrate you into carbon dust. Only about 10% of those struck by lightning are killed. But the real story of lightning casualties is the survivors - 70% suffer life-long severe medical problems, 30% are debilitated and can't work for a living.

In lightning safety, a "myth" is not as good as a mile ☺. Distance is your best protection from lightning, that and proper shelter.