

One dangerous aspect of weather that sometimes is not taken as seriously as others is lightning.

Summer is the peak season for one of the nation's deadliest weather phenomena, but lightning strikes happen at all times of the year.

In the United States, an average of 58 people are killed each year by lightning. In 2008, 28 people have died due to lightning. In 2009, 34 people were struck and killed, while hundreds of others were permanently injured.

Of the victims who were killed by lightning in 2009: 100 percent were outside; 82 percent were male; 71 percent were males between the ages of 10 - 50, 21 percent were doing yard work; 18 percent were heading toward a safe shelter.

The reported number of injuries is likely far lower than the actual total because many people do not seek help or doctors do not record it as a lightning injury.

People struck by lightning suffer from a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms, including memory loss, attention deficits, sleep disorders, and numbness.

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Lightning Safety

When lightning is detected in the area, move into a sturdy building or an automobile with a metal top. The frame of the building or of a metal car body will allow the charge to be conducted away from you.

Outdoor activities such as golfing and baseball can present a risk to those in attendance, as these take place on a fairway or ball field, both of which are wide open.

Those attending rodeos or concerts in open arenas, sitting on metal bleachers or under a metal overhang, are also at risk.

Get out of boats and away from water, as water is an electrical conductor. On the open water, you may become the tallest object and a prime target.

When indoors, avoid using any corded and electrical appliances. Also stay away from pools, tubs, showers, or any other plumbing. Electricity can travel through wiring and plumbing, posing a risk to those in contact.

If someone is struck by lightning, get medical help immediately. With proper treatment, including CPR if necessary, most lightning victims survive.

Did you know...? Thunderstorms do not have to be large in size or severe in nature to create potentially fatal lightning strikes.

As a thunderstorm grows, areas of rising and descending air cause a separation of positively and negatively charged particles within the storm.

At the same time, oppositely charged particles are gathering on the ground below. The attraction between the particles in the cloud and at the ground quickly grows, and once the force is strong enough to overcome the air's resistance, lightning occurs.

