



**Public Information Statement
National Weather Service Melbourne FL
800 AM EST Mon Feb 3 2025**

...Monday February 3 is Lightning Awareness Day...

Lightning is one of nature's most unpredictable phenomena and makes all thunderstorms potential killers. Central Florida is the most active lightning hotspot in the United States. Thunderstorms occur almost daily from mid May through mid October, thanks to the formation and collision of local sea breeze boundaries.

A distant or developing storm may not appear threatening, since people often associate the peak threat with the heaviest rainfall, but lightning is most dangerous near the edge of a storm. The majority of lightning victims are struck before the storm reaches its peak intensity or shortly after the rain has ended. This is because people do not seek shelter quickly enough or leave their shelter too soon after the storm. Remember to wait 30 minutes after hearing the last sound of thunder before resuming outdoor activities.

Lightning cannot be avoided in the same way one would avoid a tornado or hurricane. The only way to avoid being struck by lightning is to not be in the spot when and where it occurs. Lightning can strike more than 10 miles away from a thunderstorm, but the sound of thunder usually only carries around 8 miles away from the storm. Thus, there is a zone where you will not hear thunder, but are still at risk of being struck by lightning.

In 2024, 12 people were killed by lightning in the United States, which is well below the 10-year average of 22 lightning fatalities. However, Florida led the nation with 5 fatalities, according to preliminary statistics. Lightning remains the number two weather-related killer in Florida, only behind rip currents. It is essential to take lightning safety into account when planning outdoor activities, especially in the summer. Get continuous weather updates if thunderstorms are predicted and be ready to take action should a storm approach or form nearby.

So how can you protect yourself? Take shelter if darkening skies appear, even if thunder has not yet been heard. Halt outdoor activities immediately and move indoors if thunder is heard. Remain indoors until 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder. Picnic pavilions, baseball dugouts, beach shacks, sheds, and isolated trees offer no protection and should be avoided. If an enclosed building is not available, then an enclosed metal vehicle or bus are the next best alternatives. Convertible automobiles and golf carts do not provide lightning protection.

As the saying goes, *When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!*