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## Seek safe shelter from lightning and thunderstorms

Lightning can strike when you least expect it, that's what makes it more dangerous than hurricanes and tornadoes combined. About 47 people a year in Florida are injured or killed by lightning strikes. That's also what makes Florida the lightning capital of the United States.

During Lightning Safety Week, June 22-28, Sarasota County Emergency Management Chief Ed McCrane is reminding residents that it's important to take lightning and thunderstorms seriously by seeking a safe shelter when storms approach.

During Florida summers, severe storms can form with little warning and lightning can strike 10 miles from rainfall. McCrane reminds residents that they're in danger of being struck by lightning if they hear thunder. People are urged to use the "30/30 Rule" when they're outdoors. They should find shelter when the time between a lightning flash and thunder is 30 seconds or less. They also should remain in a safe location for 30 minutes following the final thunder clap. Lightning strike victims often assume the threat has passed after thunderstorm, although lightning can travel far from the core of a storm's rain.

Nearly half of all lightning deaths happen in open areas. For safety, look for a substantial building, such as a home, away from windows, or a vehicle with a metal roof. Avoid trees, covered picnic shelters, tents and convertibles.

If someone is struck by lightning, call 911 and get immediate medical help. Lightning strikes can cause cardiac arrest, burns and nerve damage. Bystanders are in no danger of providing medical aid and CPR. Victims don't carry an electrical charge. Many deaths can be prevented if a victim receives proper, immediate first aid.

Floridians should watch weather conditions and have a plan in case of severe weather, McCrane said. A portable NOAA all-hazards radio can provide alerts in case a severe thunderstorm watch or warning is issued.

For more information on disasters, and to find out how you can Get a Plan! for disaster preparedness, visit [www.FloridaDisaster.org](http://www.FloridaDisaster.org) or the all hazards web site at [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net)