

The National Weather Service has declared the week of June 21st through June 27th as LIGHTNING SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK. This is the first in a series of public information statements to be issued by the National Weather Service Office in Hastings containing information on lightning and lightning safety.

In the United States there are an estimated 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning strikes each year. While lightning can be fascinating to watch, it is also extremely dangerous. Each one of those 25 million strikes is a potential killer. Each year, an average of 62 people are killed, which ties the average amount of people killed each year by tornadoes. While documented injuries average about 300 each year, undocumented injuries are likely much higher.

While many people think they are aware of the dangers of lightning, the vast majority are not. Many people do not act to protect their lives and property in a timely manner, simply because they do not understand all of the dangers associated with lightning. Education and awareness are keys to reducing the number of people struck by lightning. Make sure to watch for approaching thunderstorms, and remember that if you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning. Seek shelter immediately!

Those in charge of outdoor activities and events should have a plan to follow in the event of severe weather, including lightning, so that they minimize the dangers for the participants and spectators.

Inside homes people must also avoid activities which put their lives at risk from a possible lightning strike. People should stay away from windows and doors and avoid contact with anything that conducts electricity. People should have a plan and may also want to take certain actions well before the storm threatens, in order to protect property within their homes such as electronic equipment.

In the unfortunate event that a person is struck by lightning, medical care may be needed immediately to save their life. Cardiac arrest and irregularities, burns, and nerve damage are common in cases where people are struck by lightning.

For additional information about lightning and lightning safety, visit the following web site:

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/>