

The National Weather Service has declared the week of June 21st through June 27th as LIGHTNING SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK. This is the fifth and final 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.

The topic for today is Facts About Lightning Strike Victims.

If someone is struck by lightning, it is important that they receive the appropriate medical attention immediately. Some deaths can be prevented if the victims are attended to promptly. Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to handle. The first thing to do is have someone call 911 or the local ambulance service. Check to see that the victim is breathing and has a pulse, and continue to monitor the victim until help arrives. Cardiac arrest is the immediate cause of death in lightning fatalities. If the victim is not breathing and has no pulse, begin CPR immediately. If possible, move the victim to a safer place. Do not let the rescuers become lightning victims. Lightning can strike the same place twice.

Physically, only a few lightning strike victims actually suffer burns. Due to the conductivity of the human body, lightning burns are usually minor. Most lightning burns are caused when objects next to the body, such as jewelry or metal coins, are heated by the lightning. In addition, when vaporized by lightning, sweat can also cause burns.

Mentally, lightning strike victims may face many challenges that they will have to live with for the rest of their lives. When the brain is affected by a lightning strike, the person often has difficulty with many of the mental processes that most people take for granted. The person may suffer from short-term memory loss, and may have difficulty mentally storing new information and accessing old information. Victims may often find it very difficult to carry on more than one task at a time and may be easily distracted. Their personality may change and they may become easily irritated.

Victims often complain of becoming easily fatigued and may become exhausted after only a few hours of work. This may be because mental tasks that were once automatic may now require intense concentration to accomplish. Although some victims may

sleep excessively at first, after a few weeks many find it difficult to sleep more than two or three hours at a time.

Another common problem for survivors is pain. Lightning strike victims often suffer nerve damage from which they will suffer for the rest of their lives. This pain can be so intense that it affects their ability to function. It is important to remember that while many lightning victims survive, their lives and the lives of their families are changed forever.

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

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