

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT

Thursday, March 25th, 2010

...2010 Severe Weather Awareness Week for Nebraska...

Today marks the fourth day of Severe Weather Awareness Week for the state of Nebraska, which continues through Friday, March 26th.

Severe Weather Awareness Week provides the National Weather Service an opportunity to test communication systems and to get potentially lifesaving information out to the public. Now is the time for people to review their safety plans and be prepared for severe weather season.

The topic for today is lightning.

Lightning is one of the most dangerous aspects of thunderstorms, and is sometimes not taken as seriously as others. All thunderstorms contain lightning, and if you are close enough to hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning. Lightning strikes 10 to 15 miles away from a thunderstorm are possible, so seek shelter if a storm approaches. Summer is the peak season for lightning, but don't be fooled, 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 2009, 34 people died due to lightning strikes, with hundreds of others injured. Of the victims who were killed by lightning in 2009:

100% were outside

82% were male

71% were males between the ages of 10 and 50

21% were doing yard work

18% were heading toward 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, sleep disorders, and numbness.

If you are outside and a thunderstorm threatens, get into a sturdy building or hard topped vehicle immediately. Once inside, do not stand near open doors, windows, or metal pipes. Do not use corded telephones or electrical appliances, do not take a shower, and do not do laundry or dishes, until the storm is over.

If you are outside and no building or vehicle is nearby, stay away from isolated trees or utility poles. Get off of tractors or other metal farm equipment. Get out of and away from open water. Stay away from wire fences, clotheslines, or other metal objects. Terminate any outdoor activities and seek shelter immediately.

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

Anytime the threat for severe weather exists, stay updated on the latest weather information by going to the National Weather Service Website, <http://www.weather.gov>, or by tuning in to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, or your local television and radio station. Make sure to watch for signs for approaching storms, such as darkening skies, increasing winds, flashes of lightning, and thunder.

More information about Severe Weather Awareness Week can be found at: <http://www.weather.gov/omaha>.