
June 18, 2015
PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

CONTACT:
Kenny West, Director
(770) 228-2129

SPALDING COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY:

LEARN HOW TO AVOID THE SHOCK OF YOUR LIFE DURING LIGHTNING SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK JUNE 21-27, 2015

Summer is the time for swimming, barbeques and other outdoor activities and the risk of lightning is very real. Lightning is a deadly by-product of thunderstorms, which are common in Georgia, particularly in the spring and summer. According to the National Weather Service (NWS), lightning is the No. 2 weather-related killer in the state. People who are struck by lightning can suffer from a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms, including memory loss, attention deficits, sleep disorders, numbness, dizziness, stiffness in joints, irritability, fatigue, weakness, muscle spasms, depression and an inability to sit for long periods of time.

Lightning Safety Awareness Week is June 21-27, and Spalding County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) urges Spalding County residents to take precautions to avoid being struck by lightning.

According to Spalding County EMA Director, Kenny West, "The threat of lightning can be underrated, injuring one or two people at a time." He encourages Spalding County citizens to "Take the time to learn basic safety measures and avoid unnecessary risk, during Lightning Awareness Week."

Most lightning deaths and injuries occur when people are caught outdoors. Be informed of the most current local weather forecasts and stay alert for signs of approaching thunderstorms. Lightning is nature's warning signal that a thunderstorm is in its most violent state and that you should seek shelter immediately.

To help Spalding County residents prepare for thunderstorms and lightning, Spalding County and *Ready Georgia* offers these tips:

Before Lightning Strikes

- Register for Code Red local alert system through a link on the Spalding County website, monitor [NOAA Weather Radio](#), commercial radio, or television for the latest weather forecasts, or download the Ready Georgia [mobile app](#).
- Keep an eye on the sky. Look for darkening skies, flashes of light or increasing wind. Listen for the sound of thunder. If you hear thunder, postpone outdoor activities.
- Learn the 30/30 rule: Go indoors if, after seeing lightning, you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

When a Storm Approaches

- Find shelter in a building or car. Keep car windows closed and avoid convertibles.
- Telephone lines and metal pipes can conduct electricity. Unplug appliances. Avoid using the telephone or any electrical appliances. (Leaving electric lights on, however, does not increase the chances of your home being struck by lightning.)
- Avoid taking a bath or shower, or running water for any purpose.
- Turn off the air conditioner. Power surges from lightning can overload the compressor, resulting in a costly repair job.

Protect Yourself Outside

- Go to a low-lying, open place away from trees, poles or metal objects. Make sure the place you pick is not subject to flooding.
- Be a very small target! Squat low to the ground. Place your hands on your knees with your head between them. Make yourself the smallest target possible.
- Do not lie flat on the ground. This will make you a larger target.
- If you are boating or swimming, get to land and find shelter immediately.

After the Storm Passes

- Stay away from storm-damaged areas.
- Listen to the radio or television for information and instructions.

If Someone is Struck by Lightning

- People struck by lightning carry no electrical charge and can be handled safely.
- Call for help. Get someone to dial 9-1-1.
- The injured person has received an electrical shock and may be burned, both where they were struck and where the electricity left their body. Check for burns in both places. Being struck by lightning can also cause nervous system damage, broken bones, and loss of hearing or eyesight.
- Give first aid. If breathing has stopped, begin rescue breathing. If the heart has stopped beating, someone trained in CPR should begin chest compressions. If the person has a pulse and is breathing, look and care for other possible injuries. Learn first aid and CPR by taking an American Red Cross first aid and CPR course; call your local Red Cross chapter for class schedules and fees.

To help Georgians prepare, *Ready Georgia*, a statewide emergency preparedness campaign created by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Homeland Security, offers the tools needed to make an emergency supply kit, develop a communications plan and stay informed about potential threats. Visitors to *Ready Georgia's* website <http://ready.ga.gov/> can create an online profile to receive a tailored plan for the entire family that includes the specific amount of supplies to put in their household Ready kits. In addition, the newly upgraded free *Ready Georgia* mobile app (<http://ready.ga.gov/be-informed/alerts-and-warnings/mobileapp/>) provides weather alerts, traffic updates and preparedness information for people on the go.

***For more information, contact
Spalding County Emergency Management
at (770)228-2129 or visit Ready Georgia at www.ready.ga.gov.***