

Stay Safe From Lightning: When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!

Written by Xcel Energy Field Safety Team

Submitted by Julie Simon, Xcel Energy



As summer returns, so do summer storms. You are most likely to be struck by lightning in the summer. Fortunately, accidents involving lightning are very avoidable by following basic suggestions to stay safe from the dangers of lightning.

- Be alert / aware of weather forecasts and watch for developing thunderstorms, which occur more often in spring and summer. As the air is heated by the sun, energy is created with air movement, and lightning typically comes from towering storm clouds.
- Lightning can strike many miles ahead of a storm front. If you hear thunder, seek shelter immediately, because that indicates lightning is within 10 miles of you. If you are outside, go inside a building. If you are at a park, avoid seeking shelter at an open pavilion. A building is safest.
- Lightning will typically seek something tall, such as a tree, building, or flagpole, but can also strike at lower objects. Do not seek shelter under trees, and if you detect a tingling sensation, crouch to a low position with your head between your knees to reduce your height.
- If you are inside a building, the National Weather Service advises you to stay off corded telephones, or away from any electrical device that could carry an electrical surge if lightning were carried into your home through wiring. Turn off or unplug such appliances, stay away from television sets, and do not depend on surge protectors to absorb a lightning strike. Conductors can also include the plumbing in your house.
- Since water is an excellent conductor of electricity, lightning is particularly dangerous for anyone in a swimming pool or engaged in water recreation. Swimmers, boaters, fishermen, and others on lakes and rivers should seek shelter if storms are threatening and lightning is seen or thunder is heard. Authorities warn against outdoor activity until 30 minutes after the last clasp of thunder is heard.

If a person is struck by lightning, call 911 and care for the victim immediately. You are not in danger of being electrocuted by the victim, render first aid as appropriate.