

Safety Tip of the Month – August 2007
VSI Safety Committee
“Lightning – The Underrated Killer”

Lightning kills more people in this country than tornadoes, floods, or hurricanes. During the last 30 years, lightning has killed an average of 62 people per year. Yet, because lightning only claims one or two victims at a time and does not usually cause mass destruction of property, it is underrated as a safety risk.

To be safe, it is best to have a plan ahead of time when swimming indoors or outdoors, or doing any outdoor activity. This plan of action, in case of a storm should, include the following steps:

- Watch out for thunderstorms. These are most likely to develop on spring or summer days. Thunderstorm activity is greatest during July and August.
- An approaching thunderstorm: When to seek safe shelter? If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance. Seek safe shelter immediately. Safe shelter includes: large enclosed buildings (this is the best choice) or enclosed vehicles. Stay away from small sheds, lean-tos or partial shelters like pavilions.
- Outdoor activities: Minimize the risk of being struck. Have a plan of action and stop activities at the first roar of thunder and seek safe shelter.
- Indoor activities: Get out of pools. Things to avoid: Stay away from windows, open doors, pools, tubs, showers and other plumbing.
- Stay off of phones (corded, wireless and cellular), computers, and other electronic devices that put you in direct contact with electricity. This includes iPods and mp3 players. There are numerous confirmed cases of people getting struck by lightning using these types devices
- Helping a lightning victim: If a person is struck by lightning, call 911 and get medical care immediately. You are in no danger helping a lightning victim. The charge will not affect you.
- Summary: Lightning is dangerous! With common sense you can greatly increase your safety and the safety of those you are with. At the first clap of thunder go to a large building or fully enclosed vehicle and wait 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder to resume the activity.

Remember:

WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS!

IF YOU CAN SEE IT, FLEE IT; IF YOU CAN HEAR IT, CLEAR IT.