

ESFI, LPI Urge Awareness of Lightning Safety

Lightning strikes the United States as many as 20 million times each year. Because lightning traditionally causes more deaths than tornadoes or hurricanes and occurs when outdoor activity reaches a peak, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) and the Lightning Protection Institute (LPI) are reminding consumers and those who work outdoors of these lightning safety guidelines.

"Lack of awareness about what to do during thunderstorms seems to be a factor in many lightning injuries and deaths," noted Michael G. Clendenin, executive director of ESFI.

Data from the National Weather Service shows that lightning strikes are fatal in approximately 10 percent of strike victims. Another 70 percent of survivors suffer serious long-term effects.

Outdoors is the most dangerous place to be during a lightning storm. Because lightning can travel sideways for up to 10 miles, blue skies are not a sign of safety. If you hear thunder, take cover.

For protection in homes and buildings, consider contracting with an experienced LPI-certified lightning protection specialist to install a lightning protection system, which can intercept lightning strikes and guide the current harmlessly to the ground.

"The LPI certifies individuals through a Master Installer testing program to maximize safety through education," says Bud VanSickle, executive director of the Lightning Protection Institute. "LPI-certified specialists are trained in accordance with national safety standards of LPI, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Underwriters Laboratories (UL)."

ESFI and the Lightning Protection Institute (LPI) recommend following these guidelines to stay safe during electrical storms:

- If outdoors, go inside. Look for a shelter equipped with a lightning protection system.
- Go to a low point. Lightning hits the tallest object. Get down if you are in an exposed area.
- Stay away from trees.
- Avoid metal. Don't hold metal items, including bats, golf clubs, fishing rods, tennis rackets or tools. Avoid clotheslines, poles and fences.
- If you feel a tingling sensation or your hair stands on end, lightning may be about to strike. Crouch down and cover your ears.
- Stay away from water. This includes pools, lakes, puddles and anything damp, such as wet poles or grass.

- Don't stand close to other people. Spread out.
- Once indoors, stay away from windows and doors.
- Do not use corded telephones except for emergencies.
- Unplug electronic equipment before the storm arrives and avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords during storms.
- Avoid contact with plumbing, including sinks, baths and faucets. Do not take baths and showers during electrical storms.
- Don't forget pets during thunderstorms. Doghouses are not lightning-safe. Dogs that are chained can easily fall victim to a lightning strike.

Victims of lightning strikes should be given CPR if necessary, and seek medical attention. For protection in homes and buildings, consider contracting with an experienced LPI-certified lightning protection specialist to install a lightning protection system, which can intercept lightning strikes and guide the current harmlessly to the ground.

LPI recommends contacting local lightning protection specialists for more information; or visit their website at www.lightning.org. For more information on electrical safety, visit ESFI's website at www.electrical-safety.org.

Founded in 1994 through a joint effort between Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL), the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is North America's only non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety in the home, school and workplace. ESFI is a 501(c)(3) organization funded by electrical manufacturers and distributors, independent testing laboratories, utilities, safety and consumer groups, and trade and labor associations. ESFI sponsors National Electrical Safety Month each May, and engages in public education campaigns and proactive media relations to help reduce property damage, personal injury and death due to electrical accidents. The Foundation does not engage in code or standard writing or lobbying and does not solicit individuals. For additional electrical safety information, visit the Foundation's web site at www.electrical-safety.org or call +1-703-841-3229.

The LPI is a nationwide not-for-profit organization founded in 1955 to promote lightning protection education, awareness and safety. LPI's membership includes architects, engineers, safety directors, scientists, manufacturers and installers who improve safety through lightning protection. LPI recommends contacting local lightning protection specialists for more information; or visit their website at www.lightning.org.