Cartoons may make being hit by lightning look funny, but the fact is, lightning is no laughing matter. Lightning is a leading storm-related killer, causing nearly $1 billion in property damage each year. Knowing the facts about the weather hazard experienced most often in the U.S. can save lives, prevent injuries and protect property.

**Lightning: The Shocking Truth about Nature’s Underrated Hazard**

As lightning passes through air, it can heat the air to **50,000 degrees Fahrenheit** (about five times hotter than the surface of the sun). A typical lightning flash is about **300 million Volts** and about **30,000 Amps**. In comparison, a household electrical current is 120 Volts and 15 Amps. There is enough energy in a typical flash of lightning to light a 100-watt incandescent light bulb for about three months or the equivalent compact fluorescent bulb for about a year.

**Some Truths About Lightning**

**Myth:** Lightning Never Strikes the Same Place Twice.

**Fact:** Lightning strikes (like that old joke about where 800 lb gorillas sleep), “Anywhere (and anytime) it wants.”

**Did You Know...**

- New Mexico and Montana are **16 million** average number of thunderstorms on Earth per year.
- **JANUARY**
  - “When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors” is great advice, but remember that nearly 1/3 of all lightning-related injuries occur indoors.
- **FACT:** You are NOT completely safe indoors. AVOID:
  - Contact with corded phones
  - Contact with electrical equipment or cords. If you plan to unplug any electronic equipment, do so well before the storm arrives.
  - Contact with plumbing. Do not wash your hands, do not take a shower, do not wash dishes, and do not do laundry.

**Myth:** Lightning only strikes the tallest objects.

**Fact:** Lightning is indiscriminate and it can find you anywhere. It hits homes instead of trees, people instead of nearby telephone pole, and homes and businesses instead of skyscrapers.

**Myth:** If you don’t see clouds or rain, you’re safe.

**Fact:** Lightning can strike 10 miles from a thunderstorm. Every year, lightning casualties occur when people are hit outside of a thunderstorm—this is where we get the expression, “a bolt from the blue.”

**Myth:** Lightning Protection Systems… Attract lightning

**Fact:** A Lightning Protection System is a network of components designed to intercept a lightning strike and provide a preferred path to ground. The system discharges the dangerous electricity, leaving occupants and the structure safe from harm.

**Myth:** Surge arresters and suppressors will protect my home against lightning.

**Fact:** Surge Protection Devices (SPDs) are important components of a complete but do not do anything to protect a structure against a direct lightning strike or a lightning fire. SPDs should be installed in conjunction with a Lightning Protection System (air terminals, bonding, grounding) to provide whole house protection.

**Making a Difference!**

In recent years some national and state authorities have declined partly due to awareness about best practices for personal safety and increased specification of lightning protection systems for structures. Partnerships and education are fueling this success!

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Sources: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) www.noaa.gov, The Weather Channel, Weather.com, Center for Disease Control, Insurance Information Institute, Lightning Protection Institute

**The Top Five States Most Often Struck by Lightning (ranked by # of strikes per sq. mile)**

1. Florida: 25.3 strikes per sq. mile
2. Louisiana: 20.3 strikes per sq. mile
3. Mississippi: 18.0 strikes per sq. mile
4. Alabama: 15.9 strikes per sq. mile
5. South Carolina/Oklahoma: 14.6 strikes per sq. mile

**Did You Know...**

- The Empire State Building is struck by lightning nearly 25 times per year, and has been hit up to a dozen times during a single storm.