Thunderstorms & Lightning

All thunderstorms are dangerous. Every thunderstorm produces lightning. In the United States, an average of 300 people are injured and 80 peope are killed each year by lightning. Although most lightning victims survive, people struck by lightning often report a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms.

Other associated dangers of thunderstorms include tornadoes, strong winds, hail, and flash flooding. Flash flooding is responsible for more fatalities than any other thunderstorm-associated hazard - more than 140 annually.

Dry thunderstorms that do not produce rain that reaches the ground are most prevalent in the western United States. Falling raindrops evaporate, but lightning in dry thunderstorms can still reach the ground and can start wildfires.

Some facts about lightning:

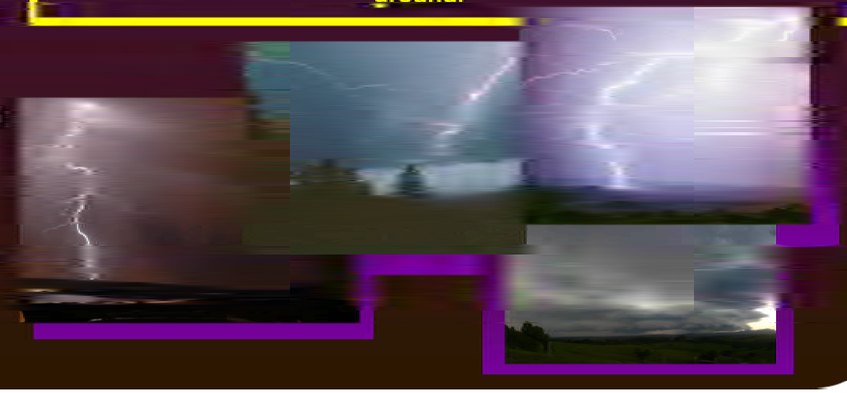
Lightning's unpredictability increases the risk to individuals and property.

Lightning often strikes outside of the heavy rain and may occur as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall.

"Heat lightning" is actually lightning from a thunderstorm too far away for thunder to be heard. However, the storm may be moving in your direction.

Most lightning deaths and injuries occur when people are caught outdoors in the summer months during the afternoon and evening.

Your chances of being struck by lightning are estimated to be 1 in 600,000, but your risks could be reduced even further by following safety precautions.

Lightning-strike victims carry no electrical charge and should be attended to immediately.

If you are:	Then:
In a forest:	Seek shelter in a low area under thick growth of small trees.
In an open area	Go to a low place such as a ravine or valley. Be alert for flash floods.
On open water	Get to land and find shelter immediately.
Anywhere you feel your hair stand on end (which indicates that lightning is about to strike)	Squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact with the ground. DO NOT lie flat on the ground.