

When Thunder Roars or Lightning Flashes, Go Indoors!

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Lightning is one of the leading causes of weather-related fatalities. In the U.S., floods are the only weather events causing more fatalities than lightning. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that each year hundreds of people are injured by lightning strikes.

Your odds of being struck by lightning in a given year are relatively low — only around 1 in 500,000. However, some factors can increase your odds.

Lightning most often strikes people who work outside or engage in outdoor recreational activities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one-third of lightning strike deaths occur on farms. Other common places where people are struck by lightning include industrial work sites and private homes.

Lightning can happen any time of year but July and August are months with the highest-recorded number of lightning strikes. Time of day is also a factor as two-thirds of all reported lightning casualties occurred between noon and 6 p.m.

It is important to pay attention to the weather forecast and be prepared in case conditions change. If you have a smart phone, sign up for weather alerts. Pay attention to early weather signs of potential lightning strikes like distant thunder. Be ready to stop all your outdoor activities if weather threatens and immediately seek safe shelter.

Lightning: What You Need to Know

- When thunderstorms are in the area, there is NO PLACE outside that is safe!
- If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike you. **Remember: “When thunder roars, go indoors!”** If you are hard of hearing or know someone who is deaf, it is important to recognize a flash of lightning as your sign to go indoors!
- When you hear thunder or see a lightning flash, immediately move to a safe shelter like a substantial building or metal-topped vehicle.
- Shelter in place for at least 30 minutes AFTER you hear the last rumble of thunder.

Indoor lightning safety – 32% of lightning injuries occur indoors.

- Do not use your landline phone. Stay off computers and other electrical equipment — anything that puts you in direct contact with electricity.
- If you have time and it is safe to do so, unplug your electrical devices and appliances.
- Avoid plumbing. Don't bathe, shower or wash dishes by hand.
- Stay away from windows and doors, and stay off porches.
- Do not lie on concrete floors and do not lean against concrete walls.

Last resort outdoor risk reduction tips — if you are caught outside with no safe shelter:

- Immediately get off elevated areas such

New Focus on Disaster Education

Starting this month, the NEBLINE will have a section dedicated to disaster education, which could include mental wellness. This replaces the previous wildlife section. For information and resources on wildlife, visit <http://wildlife.unl.edu> and <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest>.

- as hills, mountain ridges or peaks.
- Never lie flat on the ground.
- Never shelter under an isolated tree.
- If you are camping in an open area, find safe shelter immediately. Tents offer NO protection!
- If you are in a group, spread out to avoid the current from a lightning strike traveling between members.
- Immediately get out of and away from ponds, lakes and other bodies of water.
- Stay away from objects which conduct electricity (barbed wire fences, power lines, windmills, etc.).
- Protect your pets. A dog house isn't safe in a storm and pets should never be left outside on a chain.

Myths and Facts from the National Weather Service

Myth: No rain? No clouds overhead? You are safe from lightning.

Fact: Lightning often strikes more than three miles from the center of a thunderstorm, far outside the rain or thunderstorm cloud. According to the National Weather Service, these “bolts from the blue” can strike 10–15 miles from the thunderstorm.

Myth: When you are in a car, the rubber tires protect you from lightning because they insulate you from the ground.

Fact: Most cars are safe from lightning, but it isn't because of the rubber tires. You are protected because the car has a metal roof and metal sides. If

lightning strikes a vehicle, it goes through the metal frame into the ground. This is one reason why you shouldn't lean on the doors of your car during a thunderstorm. Convertibles, motorcycles, bicycles, cars with fiberglass shells and some outdoor recreational vehicles offer no protection from lightning.

Myth: If you touch someone who has been struck by lightning, you will be electrocuted.

Fact: It is safe to touch a lightning victim to give him/her first aid. The human body does not store electricity. Immediate medical attention, including calling 911, starting CPR and using an AED, may be critically important to keep the person alive until more advanced medical care arrives.

Myth: If you are in a house, you are 100% safe from lightning.

Fact: A house is a safe place to be during a thunderstorm as long as you avoid anything which conducts electricity.

Source: National Weather Service, *Lightning Myths and Facts*, www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-myths.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension's Disaster Education website, <https://disaster.unl.edu>, has resources for:

- Families & individuals
- Homeowners
- Businesses & communities
- Agriculture

Sleep Impacts Mental and Physical Health

Susan Harris,

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How much sleep did you get last night? If you live in Nebraska, where current stress levels are high, there is about a 30% chance that it was less than seven hours and not enough for a body to recharge all its parts.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization have made it official: **Sleep Deprivation is a public health problem.** Fifty years ago, Americans slept an hour to an hour and a half more than they do today. Some might be proud of accomplishing more in a day and sleeping less, but they should consider how the body deprives itself of crucial processes when that happens. While proper nutrition and physical activity rank right up there for overall health, sleep performs magic that no other activity does:

- Sleep flushes diseased and damaged bits of toxins and waste from our brains. It also performs a process called consolidation, which cements information learned throughout the day into the brain and retains it.
- Sleep plays a role in metabolism and helps control hunger hormones.
- Sleeping triggers tissue growth that heals injuries and creates virus-fighting cells to boost immunity to illness.
- Creativity, energy levels and positive moods increase with sleep, while it also fights stress.



Turn off all devices while sleeping so there is no lighting up, dinging, vibrating or ringing.

- Muscles and organs rebuild critical cells during sleep.

One of the main symptoms of all sleep problems in adults is daytime sleepiness. Sometimes sleep deprivation will show itself in other ways, such as irritability, confusion, memory loss, concentration problems or depression. This can be deadly for producers using heavy equipment, handling chemicals or working with livestock. A study by colleagues at UNMC (Siu et al., 2015) involved farmers performing four balance tests using a pressure mat for several weeks. As sleep time decreased, they became less stable — **7.4 times worse** when they slept less than their average weekly hours the night before the test, and that was still with at least five hours of sleep! In another study, adolescent youth on farms were significantly more likely to get injured if they slept less than

9.25 hours per night (Stallones et al., 2006). Agriculture is dangerous enough for adults. Let's not allow children and teens to be in even more danger. They need much more sleep than the 8 hours recommended for adults.

A surprising fact for many parents is that young children who exhibit symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may actually be suffering from only sleep deficiency, according to Dr. Victoria Molfese, Child, Youth and Family Studies at University of Nebraska–Lincoln. The symptom of “bouncing off the walls” and seeming to be full of extra energy, can be a sign that a child needs more sleep! In addition to basic daily life routines like food and beverage intake and physical activity, consideration for sleep hygiene — nightly routine — is imperative. Evening screen time and household light, noises and lights in the bedroom, and time in bed should be analyzed by a physician before any medication is prescribed for ADHD.

Sleep is the single most effective way to reset body functions for good health in humans of all ages, and lack of it has more impact on aging than anything else we can do to our bodies. Going without it means risking a whole slew of breakdowns, including high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, mental instability and even obesity.

It is crucial for individuals to respect the need for adequate sleep and make it a priority in daily routines. A few ways to achieve better quality sleep include the following:

- Go to bed, and more importantly, get up at the same time every day. This is crucial for setting our biological clock! Use the alarm clock the right way: NO snooze button. Get up and get out on time.
- Sleep in a room temperature of 60–68°F.
- Turn off all devices while sleeping so there is no lighting up, dinging, vibrating or ringing. Phone alarms still work in silenced or airplane modes.
- Allow eyes to take in plenty of bright light first thing in the morning and avoid it in the evening. Lower lights in the house after the sun goes down and make sleep spaces absolutely dark.
- If there is a struggle with insomnia or waking not feeling refreshed each morning, consider an in-home sleep study, as prescribed by a physician.

Sleep aids are not recommended as a first solution, as they can create dependency and next-day “hangover” effects or sleepiness, according to Dr. David Cantal, Pulmonologist at Platte Valley Medical Group in Kearney, Nebraska. Melatonin supplements can be helpful in small doses and for short time frames to help normalize a sleep routine that has been disrupted by shift work or time zone changes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension handout, “Tips & Tricks for Better Sleep,” with a list of 30 sleep tips and tricks, is online at <http://go.unl.edu/sleepips>.

For program information about sleep deprivation and how to conquer it, contact Susan Harris at susan.harris@unl.edu.