

**There is no safe  
place outdoors!**

### **Reduce Risk Outdoors**

- If possible, get inside an enclosed building or a hard-topped vehicle.
- If your area is prone to afternoon thunderstorms, plan outdoor activities in the morning.
- Stay clear of tall, isolated objects like trees. If you are in a field, you may be the tallest object.
- Avoid metal objects, carports, tents, and picnic shelters.



Tree exploded by lightning.  
Photo courtesy of National Lightning Safety Institute.

Additional information about lightning safety is available on the National Weather Service lightning safety website. This site contains a wealth of information about lightning safety and provides insight to the science and medical aspects of lightning.

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov>

## **For More Information**

Please contact the following agencies for more information about protecting your family from natural hazards:

Doña Ana County Local Emergency Planning Committee

[www.donaanalepc.org](http://www.donaanalepc.org)

Office of Emergency Management  
[www.donaanacounty.org/emergency](http://www.donaanacounty.org/emergency)  
(575) 647-7900  
1170 North Solano, Suite O  
Las Cruces, NM 88001

Doña Ana County Flood Commission  
[www.donaanacounty.org/flood](http://www.donaanacounty.org/flood)  
(575) 525-5558

Elephant Butte Irrigation District  
[www.ebid-nm.org](http://www.ebid-nm.org)  
(575) 526-6671

City of Las Cruces Public Works Dept.  
(575) 528-3131  
[www.las-cruces.org/Departments/public%20works.aspx](http://www.las-cruces.org/Departments/public%20works.aspx)

NM Department of Transportation  
Roadway Conditions  
<http://www.nmroads.com>  
1-800-432-4269

National Weather Service El Paso/Santa Teresa  
[www.srh.noaa.gov/epz](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/epz)

American Red Cross  
Southwest New Mexico Chapter  
[www.redcrossnewmexico.org](http://www.redcrossnewmexico.org)

Unless otherwise noted, the information in this brochure has been adapted from NOAA's National Weather Service, the American Red Cross, and the Doña Ana County Flood Commission.

January 2012



# **Thunderstorms and Lightning**

## **NATURAL HAZARDS Of Southern New Mexico**

Prepared by the Natural Hazards Committee

# Thunderstorms and Lightning

On average lightning is responsible for 66 fatalities annually. In addition, hundreds of people are injured each year, many with serious and lasting impacts on their quality of life such as permanent nerve damage and hearing loss.

In the United States, lightning deaths and injuries occur most frequently in open areas. Lightning safety is crucial when you are outdoors, especially since so many activities take place in open areas like athletic fields and golf courses. If outdoors, plan to immediately seek safe shelter in a substantial building or hard-topped vehicle if you hear thunder or the skies look threatening.



**There is no safe place outdoors! When thunder roars, go indoors!**

People are particularly vulnerable to lightning strikes when a storm is approaching or exiting their area. Lightning can strike over 10 miles away from a thunderstorm.

## Thunderstorm and Lightning Safety Tips

1. Keep an eye on the sky. Look for darkening skies, flashes of lightning, or increasing wind, which may be signs of an approaching thunderstorm. Get to a safe shelter immediately if a thunderstorm approaches. Coaches and other leaders should listen to NOAA Weather Radio during practice sessions and games for the latest forecasts and warnings.
2. Postpone or halt outdoor activities before the rain begins. Many people take shelter from the rain, but most people struck by

lightning are not in the rain. Go quickly inside a completely enclosed building, not a carport, open garage, dugout or covered patio. If no enclosed building is nearby, get inside a hard-topped all-metal vehicle and remain there until the storm has passed.

**When thunder roars,  
go indoors!**

3. Places to avoid include: under or close to trees, sheds, picnic shelters, baseball/softball dugouts, bleachers and open fields. Keep twice as far away from a tree as it is tall. Also stay away from clothes lines, fences, exposed sheds, and electrically conductive elevated objects.

## Safety Indoors

- Avoid contact with corded phones, electrical equipment or cords, and plumbing.
- Do not take a shower, wash dishes, or do laundry.
- Stay away from windows and doors and stay off porches.