

Quote of the Month: (Attributed to Abraham Lincoln)

“A traveller on the frontier found himself out of his reckoning one night in a most inhospitable region. A terrific thunder-storm came up, to add to his trouble. He floundered along until his horse at length gave out. The lightning afforded him the only clew to his way, but the peals of thunder were frightful. One bolt, which seemed to crash the earth beneath him, brought him to his knees. By no means a praying man, his petition was short and to the point,—‘O’Lord, if it is all the same to you, give us a little more light and a little less noise!’”

P. M. Zall in Abe Lincoln Laughing, The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1998

1. Meeting began at 11:30 am and adjourned at 1:30 pm.
2. Member present: Cherington, Fischer, Kamin, Keen, Langford, Lines, London, Olsen, Smith, T. Wachtel.
3. I brought the following articles (parts abstracted here):

a. Gourbiere E et al. Functional consequence of electrical injury. Ann NY Acad Sci 1994;720:259-71

“Electricite de France (EDF) is virtually the sole French electric power generation, transmission, and distribution company. Electricity generation has increased twofold every decade since 1946, the date of establishment of EDF...Electrical injuries at EDF are now relatively uncommon, but they result in death or in severe functional consequence in 5.6% of the cases studied (56 deaths and 59 serious disabilities in 2080 injuries).”

b. Junkins EP et al. Lightning strike to the head of a helmeted motorcyclist. Am J Emerg Med 1999;17:213-4 (letter).

“An 11 year old boy presented to a local emergency department 2 hours after a lightning strike to his head while riding a motorcycle...His physical examination findings were remarkable for blood in his left external canal...a 4 cm area of singed hair on his left parietal scalp...The literature contains two case reports of survivors of lightning strikes to the head while wearing protective head gear...To date, this appears to be the first case where a victim of such an injury escaped with almost no permanent central nervous system injuries.”

c. Norman ME, Younge BR. Association of high-dose intravenous methylprednisolone with reversal of blindness from lightning in two patients. Ophthalmology 1999;106:743-5

“During a 1994 summer thunderstorm, four sea kayakers took refuge in an elevated bunker constructed of steel girders...The bunker received a direct lightning strike. All four kayakers received timely lay-bystander CPR and evacuation.”

4. Carl F. Ojala of Eastern Michigan University is the newest LDC member. He sent the following article: The lightning hazard in Michigan by Robert F. Ferrett and Carl F. Ojala. Michigan Academician XXIV, 1992:427-41.

Carl and his colleagues have been collecting lightning casualty data. They have found that Storm Data underreported lightning deaths in Michigan by 17%.

5. Ken Langford spoke about capturing stepped leaders on video. This subject has been discussed here in the past by those with the most knowledge about photography (Berger, Blanke, Langford, and Swanson). Ken said that the duration of 1 video frame = 1/30 second; the duration of a stepped leader = 1/50 second. Therefore, Ken concludes that it should be relatively easy for a photographer to capture a stepped leader on video.

Ken also mentioned that he knows someone who lives in a mobile home in Boulder. The house is 25 feet from a power line. They wonder if this line could be responsible for the interference he is experiencing on his computer. Someone with a Gauss meter measured the EMF in the home. We do not have the results. Gene Lines pointed out that the home is a Faraday cage and that if it were grounded properly, there may be a dissipation effect and less interference on the computer. Gene stated that the induced field effects within the home (Faraday cage) might be corrected by the grounding. (By contrast, electrical current travels on the outside of the Faraday cage.

6. The members discussed the procedure for admitting new members to LDC. We enthusiastically invite all persons who have a sincere interest in matters pertaining to lightning to join us. The members suggest that the new member submit a resume or Curriculum Vitae. In addition, he or she agree that they would a.) not use the LDC affiliation to promote any commercial enterprise; and b.) not represent their views as reflecting any policy positions of LDC.
7. Rick Smith reported a major lightning strike to a large home near Aspen, Colorado. There were no injuries but the structure was nearly totally destroyed by either an explosion or implosion.
8. Gene Lines gave a superb presentation on Surge Protectors. I shall not try to (because I would fail to do it justice) to summarize his talk. However, he has written two papers on the subject that will soon be available on our Web Site.
9. Our next Social Event will take place on Friday, June 4, 1999 at 6 pm at the **Bella Ristorante in Park Meadows Mall** near the intersection of I-25 and County Line Road (Littleton, CO 80124). The price for dinner is \$21.95 per person (not including drinks or gratuity). Please contact Cheryl Toler by phone (303 629 4258) or email and let her know if you plan to attend.

We have had dinner meetings there in the past and they were great! Entertainment -- Rich Kithil as Benjamin Franklin in France!!

10. These minutes reflect the comments of members present and do not reflect positions of the LDC.
11. Next meeting will be held at 11:30 am on **Friday, June 4, 1999** in the Main Auditorium of St. Anthony Central Hospital.

Note the **change from the usual schedule**. We shall be meeting on the **first** Friday in June. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Elisabeth Gourbiere of France.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Cherington, MD
Chair, Scientific Committee LDC