



LIGHTNING DATA CENTER
April 13, 2007
Minutes
St. Anthony Hospital, Denver, CO



Lightning Data Center
St. Anthony Central Hospital
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As many may have observed, if it "Friday the 13th" then there is an LDC meeting. So, we ask the question: "Is Friday the 13th bad for your health?"

Paraskevidekatriphobia: Fear of Friday the 13th

From David Emery's web site, Urban Legends and Folklore, (http://urbanlegends.about.com/cs/historical/a/friday_the_13th.htm) and the PubMed.gov web site, an abstract of a study published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1993 entitled "Is Friday the 13th Bad for Your Health?" Mr. Emery summarizes that with "the aim of mapping "the relation between health, behaviour, and superstition surrounding Friday 13th in the United Kingdom," its authors compared the ratio of traffic volume to the number of automobile accidents on two different days, Friday the 6th and Friday the 13th, over a period of years".

Mr. Emery continues, "Incredibly, they found that in the region sampled, while consistently fewer people chose to drive their cars on Friday the 13th, the number of hospital admissions due to vehicular accidents was significantly higher than on "normal" Fridays."

The conclusion: "Friday 13th is unlucky for some. The risk of hospital admission as a result of a transport accident may be increased by as much as 52 percent. Staying at home is recommended."

The abstract follows:

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Department of Public Health, Mid Downs Health Authority, Haywards Health, West Sussex.

OBJECTIVE--To examine the relation between health, behaviour, and superstition surrounding Friday 13th in the United Kingdom. DESIGN--Retrospective study of paired data comparing driving and shopping patterns and accidents. SUBJECTS--Drivers, shoppers, and residents. SETTING--South West Thames region. MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES--Numbers of vehicles on motorways; numbers of shoppers in supermarkets; and hospital admissions due to accidents. RESULTS--There were consistently and significantly fewer vehicles on the southern section of the M25 on Friday the 13th compared with Friday the 6th. The numbers of shoppers were not significantly different on the two days. Admissions due to transport accidents were significantly increased on Friday 13th (total 65 v 45; $p < 0.05$). CONCLUSIONS--Friday 13th is unlucky for some. The risk of hospital admission as a result of a transport accident may be increased by as much as 52%. Staying at home is recommended.

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1. Members present (who apparently do not have Paraskevidekatriphobia : Burrows, M. Cherington, N. Cherington, Clark, Foley, Gahagan, Gartling, R. Gift, Langford, McDonough, Mullan, Nibbe, Palmer, Rein, Wells, Yarnell

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2. Announcements included the following:
 - a. Dr. Ryan Blumenthal has requested any feedback or commentary regarding his e-mail (which was distributed to all members 3/2/07) concerning his findings of *lightning-induced and/or catecholamine-induced haemorrhagic myocarditis and noted free-lying erythrocytes between the myocardial fibres and frank streaky linear intra-myocardial haemorrhages* present in the heart of a 13 year-old female lightning fatality case (January 2007 in Centurion, South Africa). If you have any comments that you would like to share with the LDC group, please send your response to Sue Wiggins (SueWiggins@Centura.Org) and she will distribute to the LDC membership (see discussion item below on an LDC listserve).
 - b. Reminder to Denver area LDC members (and visitors) that the Denver Museum of Nature & Science has the Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World exhibit on view through May 20, 2007. LDC members that have seen the exhibit say it is very worthwhile and entertaining.
 - c. Also, in the Denver area *Café Scientifique* (www.CafeSciColorado.org) (at the Wynkoop Brewing Company) will have as their guest speakers, Tuesday, April 17th at 6:30 PM, Rich Kithil (LDC member and president of NLSI) and Robert Gift (LDC member) presenting Lightning! Science and Safety.
 - d. Dr. Yarnell has requested LDC members submit suggestions for the methodology of testing of a donor skin sample for replication of Lichtenberg figures. The testing will be conducted May 15th. So far we have suggestions of exposing the sample to a Tesla coil and also exposure to a 15,000 v, 30 ma (max) source.
 - e. The National Geographic television program Struck By Lightning was broadcast 4/11/07. Several LDC members were involved in the production of the program. In general, LDC members that saw the program believed that overall it was a good informative program on the effects of lightning on the human body. There was some discussion regarding the C.N.S. affects as being secondary to the induced cardiac arrest - hypoxic encephalopathy rather than lightning to the brain per say in some of the patients shown.
 - f. Photographs from the LDC 15th Anniversary meeting are posted on the LDC web site (www.stanthonyldc.org).
3. General Discussion items included:
 - a. An LDC listserve or forum - the pros and cons of having a listserve were discussed (need for a moderator; password protected?; where hosted?; a good place for LDC history of discussions). What do you think?
 - b. The Outdoor Safety Guidelines project (lead by Greg Stewart) was discussed by Dick Burrows. Greg will be asked to provide an update.

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4. The scheduled presentation was by Dr. Al Nibbe, presenting "The Fundamentals and Physics of Lightning". The presentation included handouts and a video excerpt from a NOVA broadcast segment on lightning. The presentation provided a tutorial on: the varieties of lightning; statistical data; development of the return stroke; the spacing of lightning rods per NFPA 780; and the writings of Benjamin Franklin (1753). Thank you Dr. Nibbe for an interesting presentation.
5. The May meeting (arranged by Dr. Yarnell) is scheduled to be on the subject of internal and external defibrillation, with input from our E.R. colleague and cardiology.
6. Meeting topics for the summer and fall months are open - so send in your suggestions.
7. The November meeting will be on high-speed photography of lightning, presented by Tim Samarus.

**Reminder - *Lightning Safety Week: June 24-30, 2007* -
When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!**

These minutes do not represent official positions of LDC or attending individuals. Any inaccuracy in capturing the discussions presented is solely the writer's responsibility.

These minutes are intended to capture the essence of the meeting as recorded and respectfully submitted by:

Michael J. Foley
Co-Chair
LDC Administrative Committee