

**LIGHTNING DATA CENTER
MINUTES
AUGUST 8, 2008
ST. ANTHONY CENTRAL HOSPITAL, DENVER, CO
www.stanthonyldc.org**

Monthly Quote: "He had been struck by lightning. It had happened at the height of one of Savannah's typical summer –afternoon thunderstorms. Driggers had been lying in bed with his new girlfriend, Barbara, when a wiry tongue of fire licked out from the charcoal-gray sky and enveloped his house. Barbara's hair suddenly stood on end. The first thought that ran through Drigger's head was that he had never had that kind of effect on a woman before." From Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil, by John Berendi. Random House, New York.

1. Meeting began at 11:45 AM and adjourned at 1:00 PM.
2. Members present: Cherington, McDonough, Langford, Gift, Collier, Nibbe, Keen, Clark, Lammertse, Foley, Stewart, and Elder. Steve Clark moderated the meeting.
3. For those of you wanting to see footage of the coverage of the July LDC meeting by 9News, go to 9news.com. In the search box on the home page, enter "Summertime means lightning" and press enter. The next webpage will show a link entitled "Summertime means lightning in the Colorado skies". Click on the link and the article and link to the video (right-hand side) will appear. This is a true and accurate way to see it, as I just did this today (Aug. 11, 2008). Thanks again to Chris Vanderveen and the folks at 9News for the coverage.
4. Gil brought in two articles: One about the lightning strike at the CSU campus which led to a double-fatality, and the other about a lightning strike in Norway during a soccer game, which caused 45 injuries. Also, there was mention of yet another soccer game where people were struck and hurt, this time in Berlin (Denver Post, Sunday, 8-10-08, p. 9A).
5. Ken Langford mentioned a subscription service called "Strike UPS", run by the folks at Vaisala. This service provides real-time monitoring of lightning and if lightning is threatening the subscriber's location, the service will turn off the subscriber's electrical equipment until the threat has passed.
6. Our members are not immune to lightning strikes (or near-misses). As most of you know, Dr. Cherington's home was hit by lightning, which blew a small hole in his 6-socket power strip. Rich Keen reported his neighbor's home was hit and Mike Foley also indicated his neighbor's home took a hit. Even though Mike's neighbor took the hit, Mike himself ended up having to replace some of the electronics in *his* home.
7. After the meeting, Alan Elder told me a story of how his mother, during the decade of 1900, witnessed a ball of light (ball lightning) pop out of the wall where the stovepipe is, float across the room, and down through the floor, without any sound throughout. Alan's curiosity has been piqued ever since.

8. Al Nibbe presented the material for the monthly quote, which is from a novel that is based partially of true events. He also presented a short article on the Norway soccer event, which listed some lightning-strike odds. 1 in 700,000 – chances of being struck by lightning in 1 year, per NWS. 1 in 5,000 – Odds of being struck in a lifetime. 1 in 10 – Number of people that die after being hit by lightning.
9. Our featured speaker was Greg Fairman, Deputy Coroner/Investigator with the Office of the Larimer County Coroner/Medical Examiner. His presentation was about the double-fatality associated with a lightning strike at the CSU campus in Fort Collins, Colorado this last July. The two men had been practicing martial arts in a grove of trees, when it appears they sought shelter underneath one of the trees in the grove. Lightning hit that tree and went downwards towards the ground until it reached head level of one of the men. When help arrived, one of the men was pronounced dead at the scene and the other was taken to the hospital, where he died a few days later. This talk focused on the man pronounced dead at the scene. Photos were shown of the man's body, his heart, and of the accident scene. The body showed what appeared to be multiple burn points on the shoulders and a burn mark on the back of his head, which was commensurate with the bottom of the lightning channel seen in the tree. This suggests the lightning jumped from the tree through the man to ground. Ferning patterns were also seen to emanate from lines on the body. The lines were thought to be "fold lines" made by the man's t-shirt, where extra sweat may have accumulated, allowing for enhanced conduction of electricity. Greg noted the t-shirt did not have any burn marks on it. The man's body had several areas of blue skin, which indicated the circulatory system was immediately stopped after the strike. To Greg, this meant he died almost immediately after being hit. Photos of the tree in the grove showed the tree under which the men were standing was the tallest in the grove, albeit not by much. A bicycle was found on its side near the two men and taken as evidence, since there was the possibility of lightning flashing off the bicycle and towards the men. No evidence was found supporting that.

As a corollary talk, Mike Foley obtained lightning data from Vaisala for this event. Numerous strikes were detected within a 5-mile radius of the accident scene prior to the accident. This suggests these two men should have heard rumblings of thunder well before they were hit and thus could have sought shelter well before they were struck. Finally, it is not known if it was raining at the time they were struck. Steve Clark will review radar records and make that determination. Thank you, Greg and Mike, for a most informative talk.

10. These minutes do not represent official positions of LDC or its members. They simply reflect the comments made at the meeting.
11. Next meeting: Friday, September 12, 2008 at 11:30 AM in the Main Auditorium of St. Anthony Central Hospital. Subject: TBA.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steven E. Clark, Consulting Meteorologist