

**LIGHTNING DATA CENTER  
MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 13, 2009  
ST. ANTHONY CENTRAL HOSPITAL, DENVER, CO  
[www.stanthonyldc.org](http://www.stanthonyldc.org)**

Monthly Quote: “How can they beat me? I’ve been struck by lightning, had two back operations, and been divorced twice.” Lee Trevino. On the web at:  
<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/lightning.html>

1. Meeting began at 11:50 AM and adjourned at 1:05 PM.
2. Members present: Foley, Cherington (Michael & Nancy), Mullan, Langford, Wachtel, Clark, Wells, London, Gift, Cui-Gift, Collier, Engle, Nitka, Foley, Burrows, Keen (Richard & Helen), and Nibbe. Clark moderated the meeting.
3. Ken Langford stated he had a meeting with Deb Thomas and her class regarding the lightning poster. The class Deb is teaching is “Hazard Mitigation and Vulnerability Assessment” at CU-Denver, and is comprised of a mix of advanced undergraduates, Masters, and Doctoral students. The students are required to complete a project for the class and the safety poster study is one possible option. The group taking on the safety poster will conduct a focus group or two, and then hopefully design a survey to be used in the field. Right now, there is no monetary support needed, but if the field study is performed, that is when funds will be needed. Ken said the class appears to be highly excited about being involved.
4. Robert Gift mentioned a program on lightning the Discovery Channel aired recently, which featured high-speed videography of upward lightning flashes. Most likely, this was part of their “Raging Planet” series. Here’s the link to the results page of video clips about “lightning” on Discovery Channel’s website:  
<http://dsc.discovery.com/search/results.html?query=lightning&search.x=16&search.y=12>
5. Dr. Cherington will be speaking next week on Lightning and Its Neurological Complications at Loma Linda University in Los Angeles.
6. Dr. London presented a lightning strike survivor, whom I will call “Fred”, who was struck while descending Quandry Peak in late July 2009. He and his dog had reached the summit at approximately 12 Noon and stayed up there until about 1 PM, when precipitation began falling as graupel. With the onset of graupel, they began their descent. During the descent, Fred began to feel electric currents in his head. He was wearing a stocking cap at the time and could feel the current respond to the position of his hand as he rubbed his head with his hand. About 5 to 10 minutes into the descent, he encountered a threesome ascending the mountain and warned them of the potential for lightning. Precipitation was still falling, but not as intensely as on the summit. Shortly after meeting the

threesome, Fred lost consciousness and fell down. He does not recall being struck by lightning, or even seeing a flash. One of the threesome found Fred unconscious. As the young man approached Fred, Fred began to emerge from the unconscious state. Fred's dog was uninjured. Fred was bleeding on his head, due most likely to head trauma from the fall. A bandana was put on Fred's head and Fred was ultimately able to walk down the mountain under his own power. There was a burn mark, about the size of a dime, on the top of his head, slightly to the right and back. The stocking cap had a very small hole in it and a singe mark whose diameter was smaller than a standard pencil. The cap smelled like it had been burned in that location. During the descent, which lasted about 2 to 3 hours, Fred described a waking dream, where he was driving down a mountain to Loveland looking for a place to snowboard. Slowly, little by little, reality began to seep in as he was starting to recognize locales he had passed on the way up the mountain. There was very little, if any sensation of pain. Once he reached the trailhead, he realized he needed medical attention once the people at the trailhead saw his bloodied condition. He was taken to a nearby clinic to be cleaned up, get an EKG, and be stitched up. Later, he went a hospital for a CAT scan. Both the EKG and the CAT scan were negative. A day later, there was more swelling and so he went to a local physician for further treatment.

So what do we make of this incident? First, the strike itself. Some think Fred was hit by a side flash. Ken Langford thinks Fred was struck by an upward streamer. Regardless of what kind of flash hit Fred, it appears those present agree that Fred was not struck by the main lightning flash. Second, Fred should have known his hike was going to be special after hearing low voices singing what sounded something like Gregorian chants during his ascent. He found a group of teenagers from Ohio on what appeared to be a spiritual retreat. He found this to be quite moving. Later, while enjoying a cup of tea on the summit, Fred was approached by first one, then a second, and then finally three more – goats. Fred was able to snap some pictures of the goats, one of which was only two feet away from him. The goat was so close, it filled the wide-angle view of Fred's camera.

Finally, at present, Fred does not report any adverse after effects of the strike. Fred, we appreciate you and Dr. London coming and presenting your account.

7. Oddly enough, on the same day Fred was struck, the LDC's own Rich Keen was also hiking in the mountains on Mt. Sherman, about 10 miles south of Fred's location. Rich reported cap clouds about 5 miles south of Quandry Peak at around 8 AM. Later, sprinkles of rain were seen moving north, with dark clouds off to the west. Graupel began falling during Rich's hike, which caused him to immediately turn around and descend. When he reached the trailhead, there was already 1 inch of graupel on the ground. When Rich checked the lightning data, he noticed most of the lightning flashes were around Mt. Elbert, with smaller clusters of lightning over Mt. Sherman and Quandry Peak. The time of the lightning indications over Quandry Peak generally agreed with when Fred was hit.

8. The above accounts led to a short discussion about the lightning safety poster. Dick Burrows, a Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) member, has approached CMC about the poster and has not had any response from them. He has also approached various Federal, State, and local governmental entities about the poster, and has had little, if any positive response. One government agency requested several copies of the poster, and appears to have used the posters as flyers. Dick said the CMC holds a meeting approximately once a year regarding weather and outdoor activities. Steve Clark thought it might be useful to send one or LDC members to that meeting. Karen Wells suggested approaching the CMC and holding a joint meeting. Finally, Dr. Cherington suggested, after the meeting, a poster more specific to Colorado should be made. His work shows a fair number of lightning victims are struck during the 11 AM hour, with a significant number of those people being “first-strike” victims.
9. Two of LDC’s members reported seeing the film “Act of God” at the Starz Film Festival during the last week here in Denver. This film is a documentary about the metaphysical effects of being struck by lightning. The official trailer can be seen on Youtube here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgTpXoYTXQE>
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, December 11, 2009 at 11:45 AM in the Main Auditorium at St. Anthony Central Hospital. Our speaker will be Howard Wachtel, who will give a presentation on the delayed effects of electromagnetic radiation on the human body. Should be an interesting and thought-provoking meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steven E. Clark, Consulting Meteorologist