

LIGHTNING DATA CENTER MINUTES
AUGUST 13, 2010
ST. ANTHONY CENTRAL HOSPITAL, DENVER, CO
www.stanthonylhc.org

Monthly Quote: "...a small thunderstorm produced a single lightning bolt." From "Nine Injured by Lightning at Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park" in the National Parks Traveler. A link to the article is in the "Lightning in the News" section of these minutes.

1. Meeting began at 11:55 AM and adjourned at 1:05 PM.
2. Members present: Clark, Nibbe, Wells, Yarnell, Collier, Wachtel, Foley, Elder, Baker, Nickel, May, and Claus. Clark moderated the meeting.
3. As of August 16, the LDC will be without the services of Lindsay Link. Clark received an "out-of-office" e-mail stating she would no longer be working at St. Anthony's Trauma Services Unit. Devin Walter will be the permanent business support person for the Trauma Services Unit. Devin, welcome to the LDC!
4. Our featured guest at the meeting was a man who had been struck by lightning in Rocky Mountain National Park after reaching the summit of Longs Peak. He began his hike at 9 AM, reaching the summit at approximately 5 PM and was enjoying the view, and within about 15 minutes, a storm moved in, shrouding the summit in clouds. He started to head down, realizing he was in an unsafe situation. His hair stood on end and he could sense the static field; however, there was never any electrical discharge when he touched something. He found a rock outcropping, which provided some partial overhead shelter from the elements. He laid down horizontally in this partial shelter and saw a couple of flashes of lightning and estimated they were 100 yards away. The next thing he knew, it was 7:30 AM the next day and he immediately started hiking down to his party thinking they would call the rangers, when they didn't need to. He met one of his friends during the descent and was assisted to a camp, about 1 1/2 miles from the summit, where he was examined. Only then did he realize that he was hurt. His legs gradually weakened during the descent from the summit to the camp. He was airlifted from the camp to the hospital.

The man was wearing three t-shirts, covered by military-issue Goretex hiking gear and boots. Interestingly, the t-shirts have some pockmarks on them. He wore a knit stocking cap, which was covered by the hood of the hiking suit. He said his cap smells like burnt hair. He also was wearing an iPod, which survived the strike. The earbuds were ruined, although it is unknown if that was due to the strike or due to him forcibly removing them from his ears.

Michael Foley said he thought the lightning stroke current was flowing in the earth of the mountain, and upon encountering the outcropping, simply crossed the gap with the man inside the outcropping. Elder thought the man may have closed the gap, enabling the flow of current.

There was no tympanic rupture, which suggests the lightning stroke earth contact was not in the immediate vicinity of the patient. The hearing in his right ear was somewhat muffled, as if water was in the ear, but that cleared up in a couple of days. There were two burns on the top of his head, one burn on each arm, and burns on the outside edge of both feet. When he woke up at 7:30 AM the following morning, he had no pain at all. As he descended down the mountain, his legs gradually got weaker. Now, his main problem is weakness in his legs. He is unable to stand on his legs alone. He is able to stand when there is some form of purchase with his hands.

There are links to two newspaper articles describing the incident in the “Lightning in the News” section of these minutes.

The LDC says “Thank you” to this fellow for describing his encounter with lightning and wishes him the best during his recovery.

5. Ken Langford advised the above incident is the third lightning strike on people, within the National Parks. The other two were in Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park. In these two cases, multiple persons were struck. At Grand Teton, it appears there were three different hiking parties that were struck – all on the same day. Links to the news article about these strikes are also in the “Lightning in the News” section. Ken has been in communication with Sara Newman, who is with the National Park Service. It appears that the Lightning Safety Poster Project *may* receive some NPS funding, due to these incidents. Stay tuned for further developments.
6. Howard Wachtel will present a talk in December titled “You Have A Magnetic Personality.” The talk will discuss how the brain and the heart produce magnetic fields and how external magnetic fields affect the two organs. This should be a most interesting talk.
7. These minutes do not represent official positions of LDC or its members. They simply reflect the comments made at the meeting.
8. Next meeting: Friday, September 10, 2010 at 11:45 AM in Main Auditorium at St. Anthony Central Hospital. Subject: Roundtable. Reminder: Howard Wachtel will present in December. Mark your calendars.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steven E. Clark, Consulting Meteorologist

In Case You Missed It...Lightning in the News

This is a monthly listing of news about lightning and allied areas as reported in the media. A headline is listed, followed by a link to the article. Please note that some of the links are perishable, which means you'll need to go to the source for the article. Enjoy!

Longs Peak Hiker Doesn't Remember Being Struck By Lightning

<http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/24524888/detail.html>

One Dead, 16 Injured Following Lightning From Thunderstorm in Grand Teton National Park

<http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2010/07/one-dead-16-injured-following-lightning-thunderstorm-grand-teton-national-park6291>

Nine Injured By Lightning Strike At Old Faithful In Yellowstone National Park

<http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2010/06/nine-injured-lightning-strike-old-faithful-yellowstone-national-park5960>

Lightning May Have Sparked Restaurant Fire (Greenwood Village)

http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/24561390/detail.html?treetts=den&tmi=den_12pm&ts=T&tmi=den_12pm_1_01000208092010

We joke about Friday the 13th in our meetings...

Friday 13 unlucky for lightning boy

<http://news.uk.msn.com/uk/articles.aspx?cp-documentid=154392985>

Lightning sends Littleton teen to hospital

http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_15795957

Dramatic Video: Lightning Strikes Vehicle On I-70

<http://www2.wnct.com/news/2010/aug/17/1/dramatic-video-lightning-strikes-vehicle-49057-vi-14434/>