

LIGHTNING DATA CENTER MINUTES
May 9, 2014
ST. ANTHONY HOSPITAL WEST, LAKEWOOD, CO
www.stanthonyhosp.org/ldc

Monthly Quote: “Cassie and friend Megan Farrell were shocked while sitting against lockers working on math homework. Their work was interrupted when they felt a burning sensation on their backs.

"The secretary told me her upper back was bright red like a sunburn," Brodock said, adding that a red mark remained on her daughter's lower back Monday night.”

From Mlive.com dated May 12, 2014: “Students Suffer Minor Injuries When Lightning Strikes School”. http://www.mlive.com/news/grandrapids/index.ssf/2014/05/students_injured_when_lightnin.html

1. Meeting began at 11:50 AM and adjourned at 1:05 PM. Members Present: Collier, Wells, Stewart, Elder, Wachtel, Langford, Gift, Nibbe and Clark. Clark moderated the meeting.
2. The LDC website will be unavailable for about 1-2 months. Centura is migrating its entire web content to a new software platform and most of LDC's content will be moved during the second stage of the process.
3. From the Yahoo Lightning Safety Group (YLSG), Gerard Schrepfer wanted to speak about a lightning incident on a bridge. He asked if anybody knew of any lightning incidents on bridges. He can be reached at: Gerard_schrepfer@wanadoo.fr (Should be Gerard_schrepfer@wanadoo.fr)
4. A fellow named Steve, also from the YLSG, noted a Latin American study of lightning fatalities showed the fatality rate is about 17 times that of the rate in the U.S. And Europe. The study comes from Brazils' Grupo de Electricidade Espaciais (Atmospheric Electricity Group or INPE). Data came from 10 Latin American countries and “other scientific studies”, including the press. In response to Steve's note, Dr. Mary Ann Cooper noted part of the high fatality rate is due to lack of substantial infrastructure, higher lightning density, less education about lightning safety and folk beliefs which keep people from seeking safety. She attributes the reduction in the U.S. and Europe to greater infrastructure and increased emphasis on lightning safety, with the aid of the media. She is hopeful the formation of the African Centres for Lightning and Electromagnetism in Uganda, and other projects, will be the start of greatly reduced lightning injuries, fatalities, and property damage
5. Howard Wachtel spoke with Dr. Cherington within a week of the meeting and reports Michael is doing okay. Dr. Cherington, here's to your continued recovery!

6. Greg Stewart has expressed an interest in presenting lightning safety information at one of the Alpine Search and Rescue meetings.
7. Steve Clark received an e-mail from a man who survived a lightning strike while riding a motorcycle on I-70 in Missouri, enroute from California to his home in Georgia. He had read the lightning strike article in the e-Zine 5280 and contacted Steve with his story. He wanted to tell us his story and get some answers to his questions.

“Ron” had been riding on I-70 eastbound between Kansas City and Columbia when the strike occurred. He said it was raining and that he had seen lightning and heard thunder before he left. He even wondered if he could be hit, then thought “No” because of the rubber tires on the bike. He said the lightning hit him in the throat and exited through his inner-upper thigh, right next to the gas tank. His throat was burned black and his vocal chords hurt. The front of his pants were blown open and there was a silver dollar-sized burn on his upper inner thigh (right-hand side). The gas tank next to his thigh was dented. He remembered being blown off the bike and landing on his head and tumbling into the tall grass off the side of the highway and he said it felt like a very large explosion, having served in combat duty as a Marine. Fortunately, he was wearing a helmet. The Missouri State Patrol officer had a tough time believing Ron had been riding a bike because it was not near where he was found. The motorcycle had rolled about ¼ mile farther down the road. Ron thought he may have had a near-death experience.

He was taken to a hospital in Columbia, MO and placed in the ICU. While there, he was on morphine for 3 days due to extreme pain. While there, he lost fifteen pounds and was told he had a negative nitrogen balance. He was hospitalized for 8-10 days and then released with no broken bones. He went home to Georgia.

While in college at the University of Georgia, he noticed his feet tingling during work, and then later, his hands. He started to lose fine motor control. He then noticed his condition was getting progressively worse with each passing day and sought medical help and told his doctors he had been hit by lightning. They said the onset of these conditions was too long following the time of the strike and diagnosed him with MS, discounting the possibility of lightning being the cause. He was barely ambulatory at this time. The doctors were not optimistic that he was going to make it and they told his father, but not him.

At about this time, Ron had a meditative moment. He knew deep inside, the loss was a mask, hiding the real man inside. Following that, he woke up one morning and felt a little better. A little later, he felt he would fully recover and said this to his family. Two weeks later, he was able to move his hand and later on, was able to attend school. Two years later, he was declared fit for duty with the U.S. Navy.

Later, while working a job remodeling houses, a storm approached and he went under a carport. There were window screens stacked on the floor in the carport. He said he could feel electricity in the air and all of the metal in the area began to give off sparks, which was followed by lightning. He said his body felt “weird and creepy”. He thinks the lightning hit a nearby tree, judging from the spiral marks on the trunk. He says he does not have any physical sensations in response to storms following the strike.

Greg Stewart noted it may be difficult to sort out the neurological complications caused by first, the lightning strike, and then second, falling on one’s head immediately following the strike.

8. LDC Disclaimer: These minutes do not represent official positions of the LDC or its members. They simply reflect the comments made at the meeting. Furthermore, the LDC does not implicitly or explicitly recommend or endorse any product or service. Any service or product presented in these minutes is done so for purposes of discussion and analysis. The merit (or lack thereof) is open for the consideration and review by the entire membership.
9. Next meeting: Friday, June 13, 2014 at 11:45 AM at St. Anthony Hospital West. Conference Room TBA.

Respectfully Submitted,
Steven E. Clark, Consulting Meteorologist