



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY  
EXPERIMENT STATION

# MAFES DAWG TRACKS

Lightning strikes are unpredictable and random. Annually in the United States, cloud-to-ground lightning occurs 20 to 25 million times and over 300 people are struck by lightning.

Thunderstorms always include lightning. Any thunder you hear is caused by lightning! The National Weather Service advises that nowhere outside is safe when thunderstorms are in your area. This is why it is very important to get to a safe place at the first signs of a thunderstorm.

A safe place is a fully enclosed, substantial buildings with wiring and plumbing. In modern buildings, the interior wiring and plumbing will act as an earth ground. A building is a safe shelter as long as you are not in contact with anything that can conduct electricity (e.g., electrical equipment or cords, plumbing fixtures, corded phones).

If a building is not nearby, a vehicle is also considered a safe place. But unlike what you may have heard before, it is NOT the rubber tires that protect you by insulation from the ground. A vehicle's protection is from its metal roof and metal sides. Remember that because of this, convertibles or open-shelled outdoor recreational vehicles (like UTVs) and cars with fiberglass bodies offer no protection from lightning. When lightning strikes a vehicle, it goes through the metal into the ground. Don't lean on doors during a thunderstorm.

Stay in a safe place at least 30 minutes after you hear the last sound of thunder.

For more info contact:

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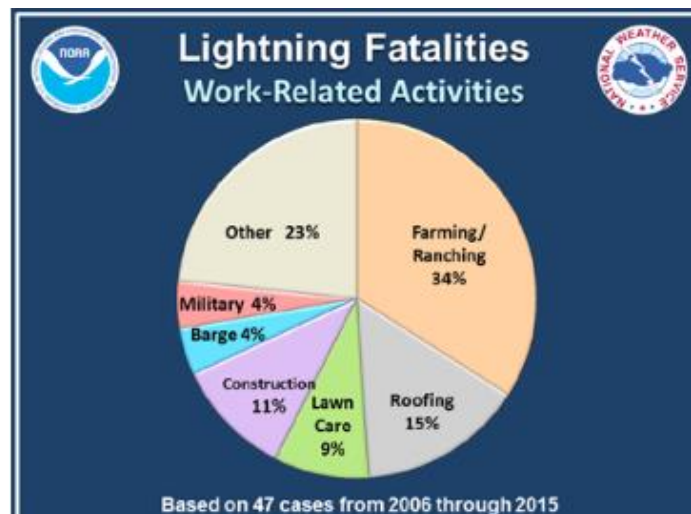
MAFES/MSU-ES Risk Mgmt.

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If you are caught outside in a thunderstorm and cannot get to a building or enclosed metal vehicle:

- Go to a low area, don't stay up on a hill.
- Never lie flat on the ground.
- Stay away from trees, scaffolds or other tall objects.
- Stay away from bodies of water.



**Myth:** If outside in a thunderstorm, you should seek shelter under a tree to stay dry.

**Fact:** Being underneath a tree is the second leading cause of lightning casualties. Better to get wet than fried!

**Myth:** A lightning victim is electrified. If you touch them, you'll be electrocuted.

**Fact:** The human body does not store electricity. It is perfectly safe to touch a lightning victim to give them first aid. This is the most chilling of lightning Myths. Imagine if someone died because people were afraid to give CPR!

## Sources:

<https://www.weather.gov/safety>  
OSHA Fact Sheet FS-3863