



Lightning Safety

West Virginia University
Environmental Health and Safety



The following precautions and actions should be taken to reduce the potential for being struck or seriously injured by lightning:

- If you are within hearing distance of thunder, you are also within striking distance of lightning.
- If you see lightning and hear the resultant thunder in less than 30 seconds, the thunderstorm is within six miles of you and should be considered dangerous.
- Whenever a lightning threat becomes significant, seek shelter immediately.
- Sheltering from lightning includes returning to a vehicle, vacating ridge or hill tops and open water bodies, and occupying buildings or facilities.
- If you are able to shelter indoors, unplug and keep your distance from appliances, computers, radios, and television sets.
- Never stand under an isolated tree in an open area to shelter from a thunderstorm.
- Avoid contact with metal objects such as fences, poles, electrical wires including overhead utility lines, machinery, and power tools.
- It is not a safe practice to take refuge from lightning beneath canopies or small picnic or rain shelters.
- If you are caught in the open during a thunderstorm, crouch down and protect your hearing by covering your ears. Crouch down in a nearby topographic depression or low spot.
- If a person is struck by lightning, immediately contact 911.
- If the victim of a lightning strike is unconscious, check airway. As necessary, start CPR and apply other first aid measures.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after a thunderstorm has passed before resuming outdoor work.

