

Safety Bulletin



Field Lightning Protection SB04-002

Approximately 360,000 bolts of lightning strike the earth every hour. It can be devastating, spectacular, and unpredictable. Unfortunately more than 600 persons in the U.S. are killed each year by lightning. The most common military activities that result in lightning strikes to Soldiers are using field phones, electrical equipment, computers, switchboards, and radios. Following these basic safety rules will help save your life.

1. When an electrical storm is approaching, cease outside training and move personnel into a building, dense woods, ditch, ravine, or the foot of a hill (move to low ground).
2. If in a vehicle, except vehicles without hard tops, stay in the vehicle and remove the antenna. Dismount from open equipment such as dozers or graders and move at least 100 feet away.
3. Stay away from wire fences, isolated trees, small structures or tents, antennas, metal pipes, tools, equipment and other metallic objects that could carry lightning to you.
4. Get out of and away from open water.
5. Discontinue use of electrical equipment of any kind, especially phones and radios with antenna extended. If time permits disconnect items to prevent damage.
6. Discontinue demolition, refueling, ammunition activities or handling flammables, when lightning is within five miles.
7. When marching in formation, double the interval between Soldiers. Avoid grouping together. If you feel your hair stand on end (an indication that lightning is about to strike), drop to your knees and bend forward putting your hands on your knees. Do NOT lie flat on the ground or place your hands on the ground.
8. Ground all of your equipment (e.g. Kevlar, rucksack, weapons, knives, radios, and any other metal or electrical equipment).

Final Tips

- ❖ Have a lightning plan.
- ❖ Suspend activities for 30 minutes after last observed strike.
- ❖ Injured persons do not carry an electrical charge and can be handled safely.