

LIGHTNING SAFETY

An alert from the North Bay Regional Labour-Management Health and Safety Committee

2007

Two workers were struck and killed by lightning in March 2007. They were working at the lowest section of the roof of a building, pumping water off the roof when lightning struck. Their supervisor, approximately five feet away, sustained no injuries.

2004

Eight workers on a New Brunswick construction site suffered shock when lightning hit the steel structure they were building.

2001

In Kingsville, a town south of Windsor, a construction worker survived a lightning strike. The worker was among a group working during a morning storm. Fellow workers reported seeing a large flash as he was struck on the head and thrown about a metre. He was standing next to a generator when hit, and the inside of his hard hat was apparently burned.

The storm may develop quickly and arrive with little warning. Here are some basic precautions

- ✓ If you're on a roof or ladder and you hear a storm coming, **get down to the ground.**
- ✓ **Count the time difference** between seeing the lightning and hearing the thunder. Every second represents about 300 metres. So, six seconds is about 2 km. Lightning can reach you even if the storm is 16 km away and there's a clear sky above you.
- ✓ **Use the 30-30 rule:** seek shelter when lightning is 30 seconds away or closer. Stay inside until 30 minutes have passed since you last hear thunder or see lightning.
- ✓ **When inside,** stay away from windows or doors and avoid contact with electrical equipment, metal walls, and other conductors.
- ✓ **If you're out in the open** and you can't get inside, stay away from trees, hills, and water. Make yourself as small a target as possible but never lie down on the ground. Instead, crouch down in a baseball catcher's stance, put your hands on your knees, and duck your head.

Sources: *Canadian Occupational Health and Safety News*, 23 August 2004; National Lightning Safety Institute—www.lightningsafety.com.



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Health and Safety Committee**