

Taking Precautions to Reduce the Risk of Being Struck by Lightning

Fortunately most people survive a lightning strike. While the chances of being struck and killed by lightning in Britain are small, you can improve your chances of not being struck in the first place by following some simple precautions during a thunderstorm:

- Avoid wide, open spaces or exposed hilltops and don't shelter beneath tall or isolated trees. Seek shelter inside a large building or a motor vehicle. Check and take heed of weather forecasts of thunderstorms when planning a day walking in the hills, sailing and playing golf.
- If you are swimming, windsurfing or sailing, get to the shore as quickly as possible. Move away from wide, open beaches and seek shelter inside a large building or motor vehicle.
- If caught out in the open during a thunderstorm, discontinue carrying umbrellas, fishing rods, golf clubs and other large metal objects. Keep away from metal objects such as motorcycles, golf carts, bicycles, wire fences and rails
- If your hair stands on end or nearby objects begin to buzz, move quickly away as lightning may be about to strike. These effects happen because the positive electrical charges forming at the ground are streaming upwards to try to make contact with the advancing downward negatively-charged 'leader'. Lightning does not always follow, as not all of the upward discharges make contact with the leader, but it is best to move away as a precaution. Seek shelter in a large building or motor vehicle.
- If caught out in the open with no shelter nearby, move to a place of lower elevation such as a hollow or dry ditch. Crouch down (to lower your height) with both feet close together. Do not place your feet wide apart or lie flat on the ground as this will increase the difference in voltage across your body, increasing the electrical charge you may receive from radial ground currents, if lightning strikes the ground nearby. Tuck your head in and place your hands on your knees.
- If inside a motor vehicle stay there during the thunderstorm. It will protect you as long as you do not touch the metal of the car body. A lightning strike will normally be safely conducted over the metal bodywork of the vehicle before earthing to the ground over the wet tyres (that are sometimes damaged slightly).
- When indoors, keep away from windows, avoid touching metal pipes or radiators. If lightning strikes a television aerial, the cable may conduct the current into the building where it can jump to other wiring or metal piping circuits. Do not use a telephone except in an emergency.
- Finally, give first-aid (and contact paramedics promptly) to anyone struck by lightning to help them recover. You will not receive an electrical shock as they carry no electrical charge. Act promptly.

Source: http://www.torro.org.uk/site/lightning_info.php