

## **Towson University Lightning Safety Awareness**

With consideration to the dangers of lightning strikes, the Towson University Police Department along with other departments have subscribed to a weather warning service that provides notification of pending weather events, such as thunderstorms with lightning strikes. When such weather events are likely to occur at Towson University, events are subject to postponing or interruption. During any outdoor event (including athletic games, concerts, and festivals such as Tigerfest and Homecoming), University staff will announce appropriate weather warnings and will direct you to seek safe shelter. There is no way to guarantee the safety of individuals outside during lightning strikes; thus TUPD recommends that individuals seek shelter in enclosed buildings, which offer the best protection from lightning.

Every attempt is made to provide warnings that allow for sufficient evacuation time. Lightning can strike several miles from an actual storm; thus individuals may be directed to seek shelter before rain or storms are visible. When directed to leave an area, you should do so immediately, in a calm and controlled manner. Whenever possible, go to the enclosed building closest to the event (for events on Burdick Field, this would be the University Union and Burdick Hall). When entering a building you should move to the most interior part of the building. If you are one of the first to enter the building, move quickly and safely away from entrances and avoid blocking hallways. Refrain from contact with plumbing fixtures, telephones, computers and metal surfaces. Remain inside until advised that it is safe to do so or until 30 minutes have passed since the last lightning strike or sound of thunder.

Enclosed vehicles constructed of metal roofs and sides offer protection from lightning when all doors and windows are closed. Convertible vehicles, vehicles made of plastics/composite materials and fiberglass, motorcycles, and any vehicles with open passenger compartments are not safe. If you are in a vehicle you should know that only those with metal exterior shells and closed windows offer some degree of safety from lightning, and this is true only when you are not in contact with the exterior lightning strikes.

Small buildings such as sheds, dugouts, or bus shelters are not deemed to be safe from lightning.

Multi-level parking garages should not be considered lightning safe. Those who remain outside of vehicles but under the cover of upper levels risk lightning danger since multilevel garages are not completely enclosed. Contact with metal rails, poles and the exterior of vehicles could endanger one in a lightning strike. Concern even exists in lightning being conducted by the metal reinforcements in concrete garages.

## Lightning Safety Tips

- 1) When you hear thunder, seek shelter in an enclosed building immediately. Lightning can travel several miles and strike outside the immediate area of a storm.
- 2) If possible, avoid sheltering near windows and doors. Do not make contact with plumbing, telephones or electronics such as computers and TVs.
- 3) Move as far as possible into the interior of the building, especially when larger crowds are seeking safety in that building.
- 4) Do not hesitate to evacuate outdoor areas when rain is not falling and/or the storm doesn't appear to be in the immediate area. Know that advance warnings are now possible and are provided for the safety of everyone who might be in attendance.
- 5) If you seek shelter in a vehicle make sure it has a metal roof and outer shell. Keep windows and doors completely closed and avoid making contact with the outer shell or with items directly connected to the outer shell (i.e. radios, handles, etc.)
- 6) Do not remain outside near metal fences, poles or light poles. Do not lean on or touch metal objects as they can conduct lightning strikes/electrical current. Metal fences can be very dangerous. Do not touch or lean on them.
- 7) Never seek shelter beneath trees.
- 8) Never remain in open fields. If a storm approaches quickly with little warning, go as quickly as possible to the shelter of enclosed buildings even if they aren't your final destination.
- 9) Wait 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder and strike of lightning before going outside again.
- 10) Always follow public address announcements when attending events. The directions provided are for the safety of everyone in attendance. Consider the need for large numbers of people to have sufficient time to seek shelter.

Lightning Safety Links:

<http://www.lightningsafety.com>

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/indoors.htm>

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/outdoors.htm>

[http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/be\\_prepared.htm](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/be_prepared.htm)

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/overview.htm>