

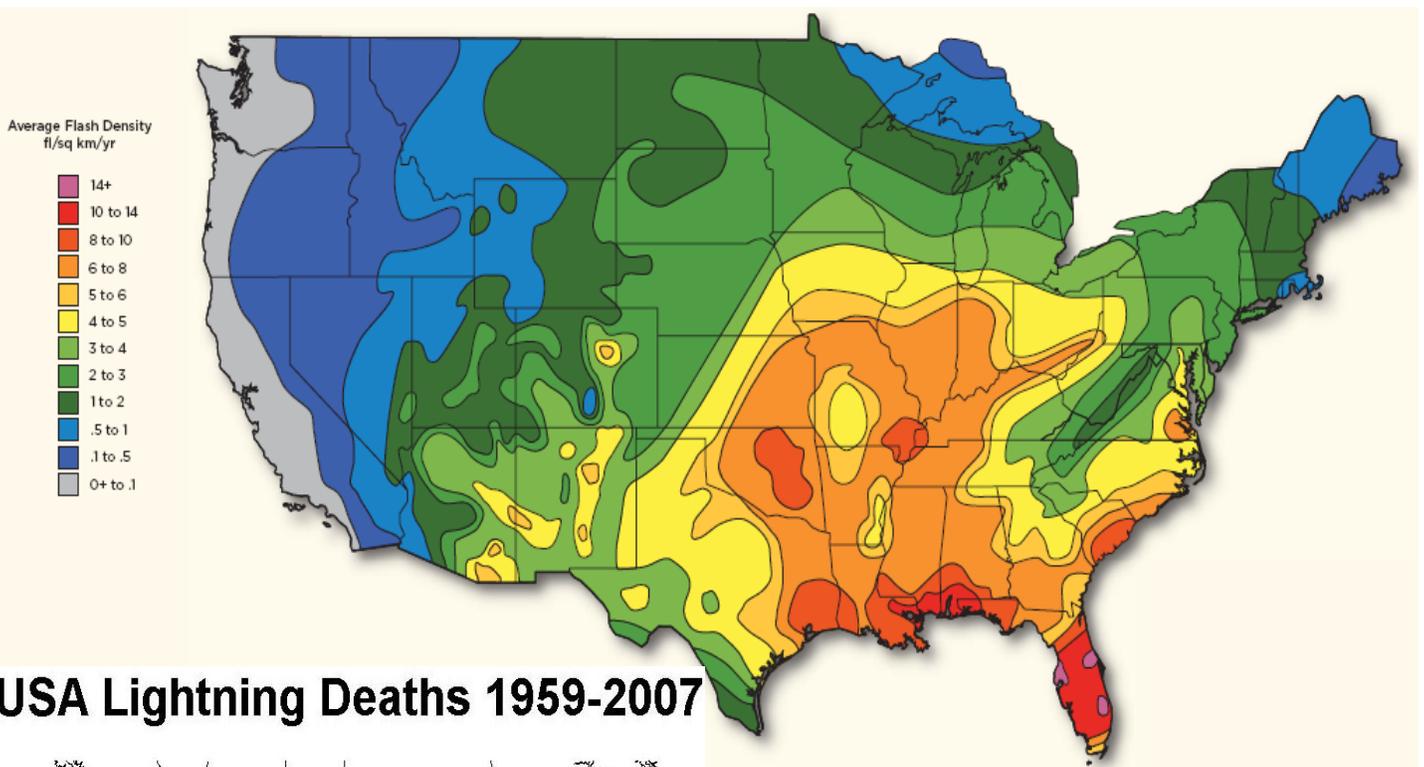
Lightning is a serious danger. Summer is the peak season for this deadly weather phenomenon, with Florida being the lightning capital of North America with an average of 1.4 million cloud-to-ground lightning strikes each year and typically leads the nation in lightning deaths and injuries with an average of 9 deaths and 60 injuries directly due to lightning each year. Learning about lightning and its dangers as well as safety measures can greatly reduce your risk from being affected by lightning.

**The National Weather Service has declared June 20-26, 2010 as Lightning Safety Awareness Week.**

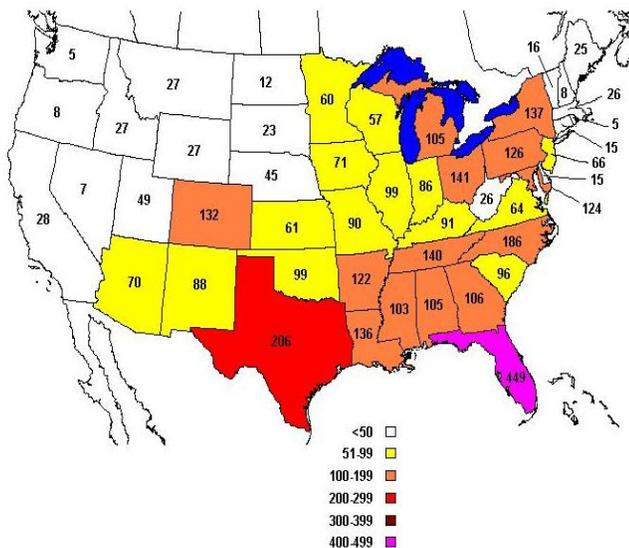
Monday's topic is facts about lightning.

Florida is the most lightning prone state in the U.S. The corridor from Tampa Bay, FL to Titusville, FL (a.k.a. "Lightning Alley") receives the most lightning in the United States on an annual basis.

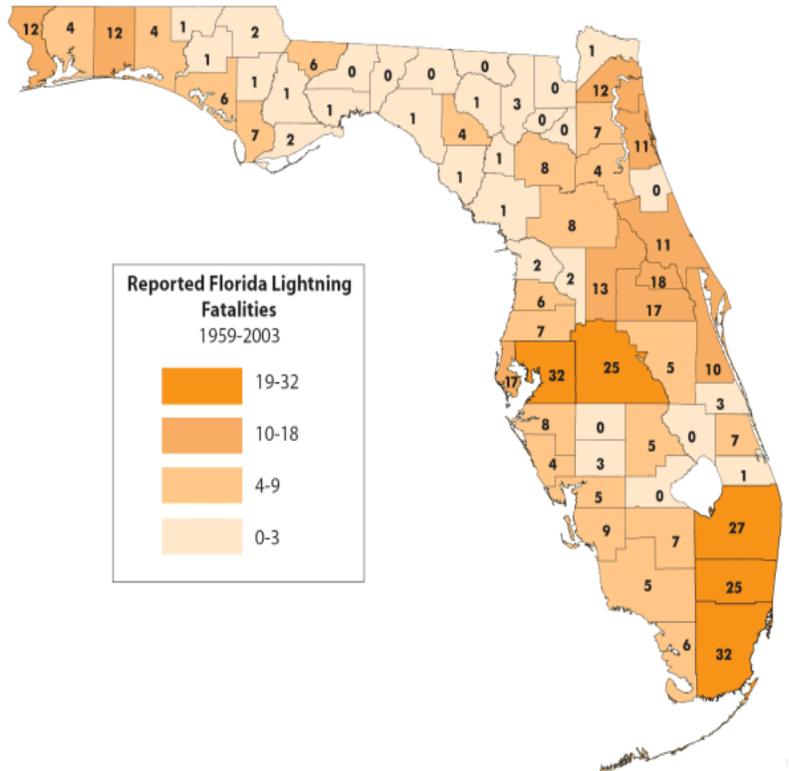
On average, Florida receives an average of 1,447,914 cloud-to-ground lightning strikes per year. This averages out to 25.3 flashes per square mile annually, though the highest density of lightning flashes occurs in the central and southern Florida Peninsula.



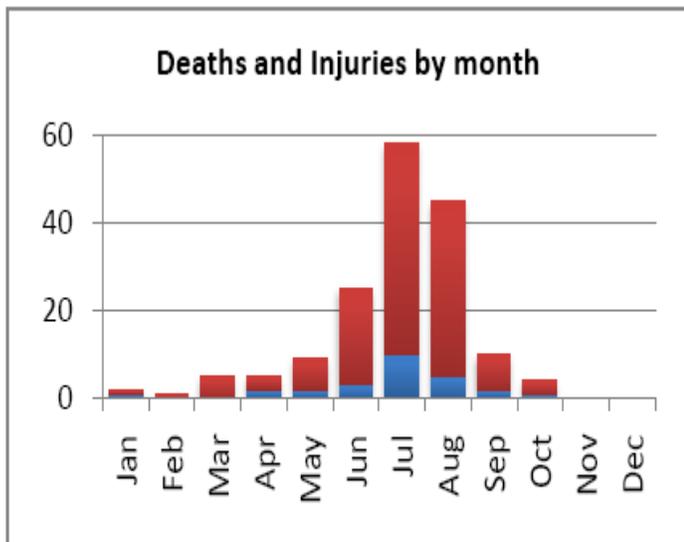
**USA Lightning Deaths 1959-2007**



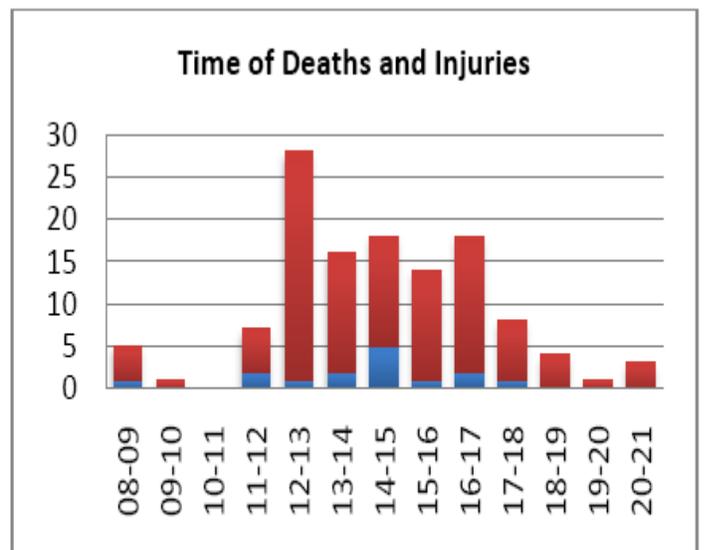
From 1959 to 2003, the counties with the most deaths and injuries were Hillsborough, Polk, Palm Beach, Miami-Dade and Broward. However, from 2006 to 2009, Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties continued to lead, but Lee, Polk and Walton counties recorded more deaths than Hillsborough.



Historically speaking, most victims are injured or killed during the summer months of June, July and August. This is due to the combination of Florida’s nearly daily thunderstorm activity and the plethora of outdoor activities held during this time in which children are out of school and families are vacationing. Nevertheless, lightning is a year-round threat in Florida and can also occur at any time of the day.



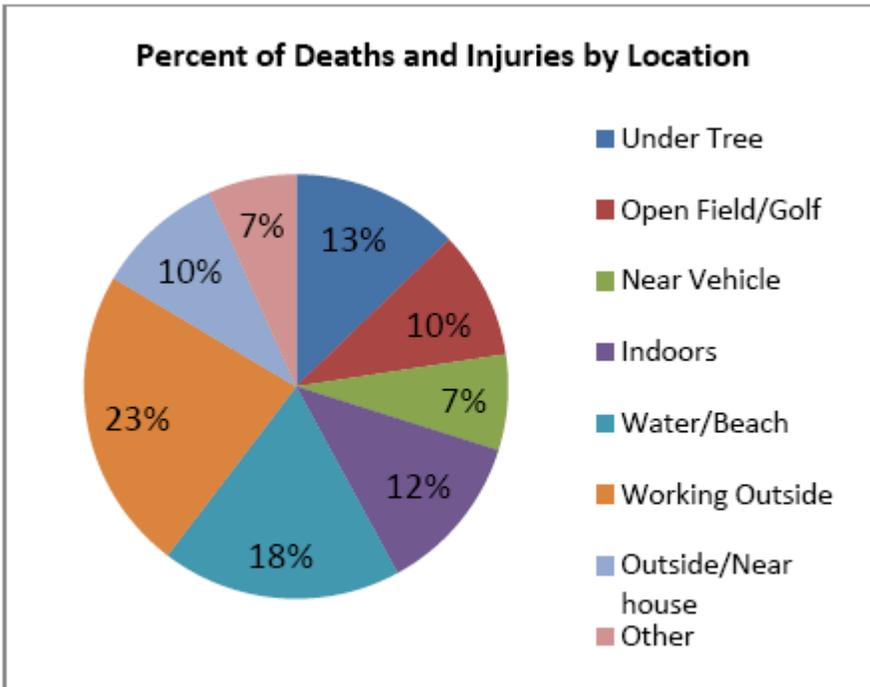
Deaths (blue) and injuries (red) from lightning 2004-2007 by month.



Deaths (blue) and injuries (red) from lightning 2004-2007 by hour.

Males were struck more often than females - more than 75 percent of the time. Additionally, lightning killed males more than females with 23 male and only 2 female deaths between 2006 and 2009. This makes males seven times more likely to die from lightning strikes. *There is likely not anything physical that makes men more prone to being struck, but studies show that men are typically outside more than women and are more likely to continue outdoor tasks as thunderstorms approach.*

**Sadly, the vast majority of lightning casualties could’ve been prevented had basic safety actions been taken.**



**Percent of lightning deaths and injuries 2004-2007 by location.**

more away from the main thunderstorm core, and frequently occurs within 5 miles of the thunderstorm core. Although many people believe this type of lightning is rare, it occurs in virtually every thunderstorm. A recent study which analyzed lightning strike victims in Florida found that most people do not seek safe shelter early enough, or resume outdoor activities too soon after the storm (rain) has ended.

*The key to remaining safe from a lightning strike is to keep an eye to the sky and watch for darkening skies on the horizon along with distant rumbles of thunder. The main tip to remember regarding lightning safety is: being outside is never safe during a thunderstorm!*

*Know the weather forecast before you head outdoors. A portable NOAA All-Hazards Weather Radio is a great way to monitor the latest forecasts and warnings while outdoors. While the National Weather Service does not issue warnings for lightning, the Hazardous Weather Outlook and Surf Zone Forecasts available online and on NOAA Weather Radio outlines the danger for lightning on a daily basis.*

**For more information about lightning and lightning safety, visit [HTTP://WWW.LIGHTNINGSAFETY.NOAA.GOV/WEEK.HTM](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/week.htm)**

Tuesday's topic will focus on the science of lightning. Wednesday and Thursday will describe tips about indoor and outdoor safety with lightning. Friday's focus will be on the medical aspects of lightning and first aid tips.

Despite numerous safety awareness programs informing people to not seek shelter under trees, many do not follow this advice.

From 2004-2007, 13% of the lightning victims were struck while under trees. Those in open fields or on golf courses accounted for another 10% of the people struck.

People need to exercise extreme caution during the summer months and especially in the early afternoon when lightning deaths and injuries are at their peak.

Perhaps the greatest lightning myth is that if it is not raining, lightning can't strike. Lightning has been known to strike up to 10 miles or