



*NC Department of Environmental Quality*

**Avoiding Lightning Strikes**

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# Lightning Facts

- There are no specific warning or advisories for lightning, but all thunderstorms create lightning.
- Lightning strikes to boats can be catastrophic due to fire and loss of electronics.

(Source: National Safe Boating Council & National Weather Service)

- The odds of a boat being struck by lightning are about 1 in 1,000
- About 70% of lightning storms occur between noon and 6 pm.

(Source: Boating Magazine, 02-10-2022)





# Lightning Facts

- 74% of lightning deaths occur in June, July & August
- FL, TX, CO, NC, and AL lead the nation in lightning related deaths
- Outdoor activities, including boating, account for 6 out of 10 deaths by lightning

(Source: CDC)

# Avoiding Lightning

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- Lightning avoidance begins before launching your boat. Check VHF, internet weather sources, and television weather reports before leaving.
- Monitor NOAA VHR weather channels for weather alerts.





# Estimating Distance

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Count the time in seconds between the sight of lightning and the sound of thunder. Divide by 5 to estimate your distance in miles from the storm.

# Lightning Seeks the Highest Point

- Mast
- Spuds
- Antenna
- Bimini Top
- Outriggers
- Fishing Rods
- Tall people in open boats

# 7 Signs of Approaching Lightning

- Tall, bright white clouds in a gray sky
- Sound of thunder
- Hair standing on end or tingling sensation
- Metallic taste in the mouth
- Smelling the scent of ozone
- Dizziness or sweating (electrical charge interfering with CNS)
- Sensation of vibrating, crackling or buzzing





# Lightning and Clouds

- Watch for large, well defined rising cumulus clouds
- As clouds darken and become anvil shaped the storm is already in progress
- The point of the anvil shows the direction the storm is moving

# Lightning: Best Practices

- Never launch without checking the VHF weather channel and/or other sources
- If you can't outrun a storm, drop anchor in a protected area
- Lower all antennas, fishing rods, & outriggers
- If the boat has a cabin enter it, and stay well away from all metal objects, outlets, & appliances
- In an open boat remove jewelry and lay low in boat's center
- Never use a VHF radio during a storm except for handhelds
- Don a life jacket

