

## ***When Thunder Roars Go Indoors!*** **Lightning Safety Awareness Toolkit for Counties**

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*“When Thunder Roars Go Indoors”* county campaign establishes a voluntary program for counties to create an awareness of the dangers of lightning at their outdoor recreational venues and provide the community with safety measures to protect themselves from the dangers of lightning.

### **Background and Statistics**

Lightning kills an average of 55 people every year in the U.S. and injures hundreds of others. Many of the injuries are permanent and debilitating. The *“When Thunder Roars Go Indoors”* campaign is an effort to save lives by taking a new approach to educate the public about lightning dangers. Fear already exists for lightning, but thunder needs to be seen as the early warning for lightning. If you can hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike. The sad fact is that the vast majority of lightning strike victims were just steps away from safe shelter when they were hit.

This campaign encourages the public to take action when they hear thunder rather than wait for lightning or rain. The campaign is inexpensive, can be developed and implemented quickly and easily with available resources, and supports county public health and safety initiatives.

### **Project Plan Outline for County**

The outline below details the steps used to implement the campaign.

1. Assess groups within the county that have outside recreation or large event venues. Invite the groups to partner with the county on this effort. Some groups to consider include:
  - PreK-12 Schools
  - Recreation and Parks
  - Community Colleges
  - Universities
  - Pools
  - Concert Facilities
  - Sports Clubs
  - Public/Private Golf Courses
  - Tennis Courts
  - Ball Fields
  - Dog Parks
  
2. Ensure all groups taking part have written lightning policies consistent with the NWS and *“When Thunder Roars Go Indoors”* message. Also, ensure all groups who commit to the program agree to install signs and educate their staff and volunteers about the NWS lightning policies.

3. Decide where to put the signs. Estimate number needed.
4. Assess sign pollution. Suggest putting signs on paths leading up to facilities or at entrances to facilities.
5. Talk to your local Public Works department about sign creation and printing.
6. Schedule a media event to launch the program (if interested)
7. Invite local TV/radio, weather forecasters, and newspapers to the event to promote the campaign during their on air weather forecasts. Ensure both written and verbal invitations are provided. Follow up to ensure attendance.
8. Invite local NWS weather forecasters to represent the agency and speak about lightning safety. Your local warning coordination meteorologist and meteorologist-in-charge from the local forecast office are good resources. To find your local office, go to <http://stormready.noaa.gov/contact.htm> and click on your state.
9. Encourage all the partners to participate in the event.
10. Invite residents and community groups to participate in the event.
11. Monitor the installation of signs to make sure they are appropriately placed and that all partners install signs as agreed.

### **Suggested Talking Points for County Executive/Officials**

- The campaign is an effort to save lives by taking a new approach to an old problem.
- In theory, everyone knows to take shelter when they see lightning; however, the problem is that by the time you SEE lightning, it could be too late. Many deaths and injuries occur while people are seeking shelter from the storm.
- Since thunder is usually heard before seeing lightning, we encourage people to use thunder as the early warning detection for lightning. “When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors”.
- The National Weather Service adopted the motto “When Thunder Roars Go Indoors” to encourage people to take the proper action when lightning threatens. The NWS seeks local partners to help spread the message within their communities and help keep their citizens safe from the dangers of lightning.
- The program requires us to educate many individuals of all ages who engage in all sorts of outdoor activities such as youth sports, golf, hiking, swimming, biking, picnicking, recreational sports, etc, that if they can hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike and they need to immediately stop activities and seek shelter, as inconvenient as that may be. (site examples of lightning deaths of people seeking shelter too late)
- Each year an average of 58 Americans are killed by lightning. Hundreds of others are injured. It is important to note that the reported number of injuries is likely far lower than the actual total number because many people do not seek help or doctors do not record it has a lightning injury. People struck by lightning suffer from a variety of long term, debilitating symptoms.
- The campaign requires a small amount of resources to help educate the public, keep your community safe, and save lives.

### **Suggested Message to Invite the Media to Your Event**

Please join your colleagues and members of the National Weather Service, leaders in the field of weather science, as (*county name*) County, (*state name*), launches a campaign to stop the loss of life and eliminate injuries due to lightning.

Lightning kills an average of 58 Americans every year and injures hundreds more, but this does not have to happen. If people would seek safe shelter at the first sound of thunder -- lightning's early warning system -- lives would be saved. Many people who are killed or hurt by lightning were seeking shelter, but they just waited too long. We need our residents to act when they hear thunder. To make this happen, (*county name*) is promoting and enforcing the National Weather Service's simple rule: When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!

We will announce this new public safety campaign on (*date*) at (*location*) and we would like for you to join us. We invite you to participate in the news conference launching the campaign and to consider the information in your weathercasts that day or night and for the rest of the summer.

(*county name*) will instruct our recreation leaders, school officers, and parents to follow this simple rule: When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors. That means to stop the game, get out of the pool, get off the golf course, and go indoors! We need your help.

Please join us in educating the public to the dangers of lightning and the safety measures to take. Please help us save lives. Be a part of our effort to lead (*state name*) out of danger!

### Sample Sign

