

# Tool Box Talk

## EXTREME SUMMER WEATHER HAZARDS

JULY 2013

### LIGHTNING SAFETY

Every year in Canada, lightning can cause as many as 10 deaths and 164 injuries. You can avoid a tragedy like this by taking a few simple precautions.

If you can hear thunder, you can get hit by lightning. Lightning often strikes outside of heavy rain and may occur more than 16 km away from a storm. If you can hear thunder, you are at risk of being struck by lightning and should take shelter immediately. If you cannot find a sturdy, fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing, get into a metal-roofed vehicle. Remain sheltered for at least 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. More than half of all lightning deaths happen after a storm appears to have passed.

Direct strikes are responsible for only 5% of lightning-related deaths and injuries. Two other types of hazardous phenomena that are caused by lightning include ground current and side flash. Ground current and side flash account for 60-80% of lightning-related injuries and deaths.

- **A GROUND CURRENT** is set up when lightning hits the ground, spreads out and sends a current through a victim.
- **A SIDE SPLASH** occurs when lightning hits a tall object, travels partly down the object and then jumps to a nearby victim.

#### FIRST AID FOR LIGHTNING VICTIMS

- Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and can be safely handled.
- Call for help. Victims may be suffering from burns or shock and should receive medical attention immediately. Call 9-1-1 or your local ambulance service.
- Administer first aid. If breathing has stopped, administer cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Use an automatic external defibrillator if one is available.

### TORNADO SAFETY

Saskatchewan tornado season typically runs from May to August with the vast majority touching down between mid June to end of July. Most tornadoes develop in the late afternoon and early evening but may occur outside of this timeframe, including overnight.

Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air which can exhibit a high degree of variability in appearance, direction, speed, strength and danger. While wide, damaging, straight-line thunderstorm winds are often confused with tornadoes, tornadoes can produce some of the highest wind speeds on the planet. The majority of Canadian tornadoes have maximum wind speeds under 180 km/h, but a small percentage can be considerably stronger with devastating impacts. Although Doppler radar is a major aid to weather forecasters in the prediction of larger tornadoes, many smaller ones are very difficult to forecast.

#### TORNADO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

- Be weather alert. Understand weather signs, keep an eye on the sky and monitor Environment Canada weather watches and warnings. Tornadoes can develop very rapidly.
- When a tornado threatens, take shelter immediately, preferably in the basement or lower level of a sturdy building at the center of the structure.
- If caught outdoors with no shelter available, lie flat in a ditch, ravine or other low lying area and shield your head with your arms.
- Never try to out drive a tornado. They can change direction very quickly and have the ability to easily lift and toss a vehicle. Get out of the vehicle and take shelter in a building or ditch away from the vehicle.
- Flying glass and other debris pose the greatest danger to human safety.
- Tornado winds that find their way into a building through open doors and windows can lead to large internal pressures and greater damage. When a watch is issued, that is the time to ensure all doors and windows are closed.



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