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Subject: Safety Lesson of the Day



**Today's discussion is from the
Environmental Factors Category.**

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THUNDERSTORM SAFETY

Thunderstorms cause significant hazards for wildland firefighters, including downbursts that can cause extreme fire behavior and lightning. When thunderstorm development is likely, lookouts should be posted and aware of signs of a developing storm. A sudden reversal in wind direction, a noticeable rise in wind speed, and a sharp drop in temperature may note the mature stage of a storm. Heavy rain, hail and lightning occur only in the mature stage of a thunderstorm. During a storm, use the following guidelines:

- Do not lie down.
 - The best position is sitting on the pack or crouching with feet close together.
 - Avoid sitting directly on the ground, if possible; but, if necessary, keep feet and butt close together.
 - Avoid grouping together. Keep a minimum of 15 feet between people when possible.
 - Removing caulk boots will not provide safety if stocking covered or bare feet are then in contact with the ground--don't bother!
- "Stay out of dry creek beds" is correct for flash floods, but has nothing to do with lightning.
- Handheld radios (with short rubber antennas) or cell phones are safe to use. Communication is vital to crew safety. Do not use land line radios or radios with elevated antennas.
- Wide, open spaces are better than trees or clumps of trees in the vicinity. Ridge tops, etc., should be avoided.
- If you feel the hair on your arms or head "stand up," there is a high probability of a strike in the vicinity. Crouch or sit on a pack.
- Put down all tools.
- Take shelter in vehicles if possible.

References:

Incident Response Pocket Guide--PMS 461, NFES 1077, NWCG, <http://http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/pubs.htm>

Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations, Interagency, www.nifc.gov/references/index.html