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http://www.paddlingcalifornia.com/article_kayaking_lightning.html



Don't Be a Victim of a Lightning Strike

One minute he was sitting atop his kayak, the next minute he was dead--the victim of a lightning bolt strike.

Getting struck by lightning is a rare occurrence, but the odds of getting struck increase for fishermen fishing from a kayak holding a graphite fishing rod, or kayakers paddling with a graphite paddle which is a good electrical conductor. If the rod is struck by lightning, the electrical charge passes through the rod, through your body, then to the boat into the water.

Lightning can also strike a metal object on your kayak. If your hand is on the on metal and you are sitting in a wet surface, which is in contact with metal, your body may then become the best conductor for the electrical charge.

Most lightning strikes occur in the afternoon between noon and 6:00 p.m. because as the air temperatures warm, evaporation increases. This warm, moisture-laden air rises and evaporates, forming fluffy cumulus clouds.

Get off the water quickly whenever weather conditions look threatening, especially if you hear thunder. The sound of thunder travels at one mile per five seconds. Do not delay!

Let's say you are out two miles from the shoreline and you first hear thunder. If the storm is traveling in your direction, at 20 miles an hour, that means it could be upon you within 15 minutes.

What happens if lightning strikes the water? If you are in the water, close to the strike and in its path, you could be killed, or alive but unconscious. If you are in a boat, the chances for survival after the lightning strike are better, particularly if you are unconscious.

Here's a few additional pointers in case you're out paddling or camping when lightning occurs.

- Tents are not a safe place to be as they offer NO protection from a lightning strike, nor is a picnic shelter, or a partially enclosed building.
- Do not seek shelter under trees, especially isolated and tall ones.
- Stay away from tall, isolated objects. Lightning typically strikes the tallest object.
- Thunderstorms typically develop in the early afternoon, so plan to paddle early in the day and be off the water by noon, especially in the months of July and August.
- Wet ropes can make excellent conductors. Remove unnecessary ropes extended or attached to you and put them in your hatch.
- Stay away from any metal objects. Unfortunately, most SOT and fishing kayaks

have metal rivets on them.

- Stay at least 15 feet apart from other members of your group so the lightning won't travel between you if hit.
- Keep your feet together and sit on the ground out in the open. If you can possibly run to a vehicle or building, DO so. Sitting or crouching on the ground is not safe and should be a last resort if an enclosed building or vehicle is not available.