

Volusia County Fire Services Safety Gram



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Safety and Lightning Storm

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Lightning can strike with a power of 125,000,000 volts. The National Lightning Institute has ranked Florida number one in the nation with lightning deaths. The 1993-2003 study reports lightning killed 126 people in the state of Florida. Lightning storms are very common in the summer months in Volusia County. The safety of firefighters and members of the public must be the first priority of the company officer and battalion commander, whether at the fire station or on an emergency scene. To prevent injury or death of firefighters or the public, several steps may be taken at the station or on the emergency scene by the company officer or battalion commander.

At the station

- Monitor weather conditions.
- Assure weather alert monitor is in working order.
- Seek shelter if performing outside activities.
- Stay indoors and away from electrical items, doors and windows.
- Do not place or receive phone calls over a hard wired phone.
- Do not use the showers during a lightning storm.
- Resume outdoor activities thirty minutes after a lightning storm has passed.

At the emergency scene

- Monitor weather condition during emergency operations.
- Stop non essential actions.
- Advise firefighters to take shelter inside fire apparatus.
- Keep windows up in fire apparatus or command units.
- Suspend aerial operations.
- Avoid having firefighters working in areas under trees, antenna towers, and open areas.
- Avoid working firefighters on high ground but direct them to low elevations.
- Stop all water activities.
- Assess the hazards and public safety before emergency work is started after the lightning storm.

All officers and firefighters should read and be familiar with standard operating guideline 104.018 adverse weather conditions.

Dispersion level chart

Dispersion range 0-40 is stable air, low fire intensity, less long range spotting.

Dispersion range 41-70 is moderate unstable air, increased fire intensity and long range spotting.

Dispersion range 70+ is unstable air, high amount of upper lifting, intense fire activity, potential for long range spotting and plume dominated wildfires.

Fire-line Handbook Jan.'98

Fight fire aggressively, but provide for safety first.
Initiate all action based on current and expected fire behavior.
Recognize current weather conditions and obtain forecasts.
Ensure instructions are given and understood.

Obtain current information on status.
Remain in communication with crewmembers, your supervisor, and adjoining forces.
Determine safety zones and escape routes.
Establish lookouts in potentially hazardous situations.
Remain in control at all times.
Stay alert, keep calm, act decisively.
NWCG Handbook 3