

July 16, 2007

DIRECTIVE: JOB CORPS INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 07-02

TO: ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF
 ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF
 ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS
 ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS
 ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS
 ALL OUTREACH, ADMISSIONS, AND CTS CONTRACTORS

FROM: ESTHER R. JOHNSON, Ed.D.
 National Director
 Office of Job Corps

SUBJECT: Staying Safe in Lightning

1. Purpose. To provide Job Corps centers with facts and safety precautions to protect students against injuries and/or death from lightning.

2. Background. Recently an 18-year old woman was struck by lightning while standing at a bus stop in Oxon Hill, MD, a suburb of Washington, DC. According to news reports, the woman stepped under a tree to seek shelter from the rain as lightning struck the tree. Paramedics were summoned and aid was given at the scene, but the woman died at the hospital. The National Office of Job Corps has received several Significant Incident Reports (SIRs) describing events similar to the Oxon Hill, MD, incident in which students have been in potentially life-threatening situations during thunderstorms. Fortunately, no Job Corps students have been harmed.

In the United States, on average, 300 people are injured and 80 are killed by lightning every year. Most lightning-related injuries or deaths occur during the summer months when hot, humid weather is prevalent. In 2006, there were 47 confirmed fatalities and 246 confirmed injuries due to lightning. According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the following 10 states had the most recorded lightning-related injuries and fatalities between 1996 and 2006:

- a. Florida – 1,543
- b. Pennsylvania – 732
- c. North Carolina – 629
- d. New York – 755
- e. Ohio – 545

- f. Texas – 498
- g. Tennessee – 473
- h. Georgia – 410
- i. Colorado – 394

Most victims of lightning strikes survive; but they typically suffer from a variety of long-term health problems, such as memory loss, attention deficit, sleep disorders, numbness, dizziness, stiffness in the joints, irritability, fatigue, weakness, muscle spasms, depression, and an inability to sit for long periods.

3. Storm Facts. Thunderstorms typically occur singly, in bands, or in lines. They always include lightning. Thunderstorms most often produce heavy rain for 30 minutes to an hour. About 10 percent of thunderstorms are classified as severe. In addition to lightning, severe storms may produce hail, high winds, or tornadoes. Lightning strikes outside of heavy rain, anywhere from 10 to 15 miles away, within hearing range of thunder. Lightning that strikes in locations where thunder is too far away to be heard is referred to as “heat lightning.”

Victims of lightning strikes are most often caught outside during afternoon and evening thunderstorms in the summer months. Lightning-related injuries have also occurred indoors when the victim was using a corded phone, near plumbing fixtures, or near/in water.

4. Safety Precautions.

- a. When a severe thunderstorm warning is issued, be sure to suspend all outdoor activities and seek shelter immediately.
- b. At the first sound of thunder, get to a large building or a hard-top motor vehicle. If a vehicle is your only shelter, do not touch anything metal.
- c. While indoors, avoid using corded phones, computers, and other electrical devices.
- d. Stay away from pools, tubs, showers, and other plumbing.
- e. Surge protectors are recommended for key electrical equipment. Ground fault protectors should be used on circuits near water or located outdoors.
- f. Avoid standing near open windows.
- g. Wait 30 minutes after the last lightning strike before going outside again.
- h. If someone is struck by lightning, provide him or her immediate medical assistance. First, check for a pulse; then administer CPR if necessary. Although

the victim has been struck by lightning, the ensuing electrical charge will not cause harm to you.

5. Action. To prevent injuries to students and staff from the dangers associated with thunderstorms and lightning, centers should revise their emergency response plans to include provisions for the following:

- a. suspending outdoor recreation at the first sound of thunder or when a severe thunderstorm warning has been issued;
- b. ensuring that all students and staff report to a designated area until the storm passes;
- c. educating staff and students on activities to avoid during a thunderstorm;
- d. educating staff and students on what to do if caught outside during a thunderstorm; and
- e. procedures for caring for victims of a lightning strike.

Centers can obtain additional information about preparing for and responding to thunderstorms and lightning from the National Weather Service at <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/overview.htm> and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/thunderstorms.shtm>.

Emergency response plans containing the above referenced provisions must be added to the center's occupational safety and health plan by the beginning of fiscal year (FY) 2008. Addressees are to ensure that this Information Notice is distributed to all appropriate staff.

6. Expiration Date. Until superseded.

7. Inquiries. Inquiries should be directed to Marsha Fitzhugh at (202) 693-3099 or fitzhugh.marsha@dol.gov, or Kelley Clark at (202) 693-3089 or clark.kelley@dol.gov.