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## Atmospheric Research

Volume 56, Issues 1–4, January 2001, Pages 325-334

# Deaths and injuries caused by lightning in the United Kingdom: analyses of two databases

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-8095\(00\)00083-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-8095(00)00083-1)

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## Abstract

Two databases of incidents in which lightning struck people, either directly or indirectly, are examined. Analyses of TORRO's UK database of lightning injuries and deaths for the period from 1993 to 1999 reveal that, on average, 49 people are struck by lightning each year. Approximately one half of the lightning incidents affecting people happened inside a building, with one quarter of indoor incidents involving the telephone. The majority of all people struck by lightning experience only minor injuries. A minority suffer severe effects (e.g. full thickness burns and/or require resuscitation) and, on average, three people are killed each year. With a UK population of around 58.2 million the risk of being struck by lightning (indoors and outdoors combined) is one person in 1.2 million and the risk of being struck and killed by lightning is one person in 19 million. Expressed in a different way, the average annual number of people struck by lightning per million people is 0.84 and the average annual number of deaths caused by lightning per million people is 0.05.

Based on records of the total number of cloud-to-ground lightning strikes, an incident in which one or more persons are struck by lightning occurs, on average, approximately every 12,000 strikes. A lightning incident in which someone is killed happens, on average, approximately every 100,000 strikes. All the fatalities during 1993 to 1999 occurred outdoors.

Analyses of the number of lightning fatalities in England and Wales (in which 88% of the UK population live currently), as recorded on death certificates since 1852, reveal that lightning fatalities have fallen dramatically during the past century and a half. The annual average number of fatalities each half century has decreased from 19 for the period 1852 to 1899, through 12 for the period from 1900 to 1949, to five for the period 1950 to 1999. Males accounted for four out of every five deaths.



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## Keywords

Lightning; Weather hazards; Weather risks; Fatalities; Injuries

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