

Safety Alert

ARTC No. 101
Issued 25/10/2017

Lightning Strike

Incident

On Saturday 14 October at approximately 8.35am, eleven people were affected by a lightning strike while working on the rail freight network near Melita, south of Leonora in WA.

The following interim guidance is provided in relation to lightning safety for all ARTC employees and contractors. A formal process will be incorporated into the Safety Management System as soon as practicable.

The above event is a reminder for teams to “**Stop & Think**”. The risks that exist due to unfavourable weather conditions as well as the appropriate controls must be considered as part of the task risk assessment or pre-work brief hazard assessment. This includes exposure to inclement weather, such as lightning, heavy winds, extreme heat, cyclone or storms. Exposure to weather conditions should also be discussed at pre-start meetings to ensure that any forecasted severe weather conditions and appropriate controls are communicated and implemented by teams.

What can you do to prevent being struck by lightning?

If you are caught in a thunderstorm where the risk of being struck by lightning exists, you can take the following precautions:

- Understand the predicted weather patterns prior to commencing works and monitor for any changes
- Seek shelter immediately in an enclosed vehicle or substantial building. If a vehicle is struck the electricity will pass through the body of the vehicle to the ground.
- Hazards may exist from heat build-up in the tyres of the vehicle struck by lightning. People should remain clear of the area around a struck vehicle and the vehicle should be quarantined and not be driven immediately.
- Never shelter in small sheds or buildings with unearthed metal roofs, or under trees because your body is a better conductor of electricity than the tree/timber.
- Stay clear of any bodies of water; and
- Avoid touching, handling and proximity to any metallic objects/structures that may become part of the discharge path, for example towers, the metal parts of vehicles or mobile plant, power lines, pipes and rails;
- Do not handle metal tools or any other metal objects and stay clear of sheet metal, wire fences, clotheslines and so on; do not ride on bicycles or motorcycles or plant without a metal roof; and
- If caught in the open, crouch down with your feet together. Do not lie down – the idea is to be as low as possible, but with minimal contact with the ground; and
- In addition, using wired electrical equipment, hand-held tools, appliances or landline telephones should also be avoided during thunderstorms where the risk of being struck by lightning exists.

If travelling, especially remotely, check BOM or other weather site for storm warnings or listen to the radio. Ensure you have made contact with your leader and if a storm approaches, keep them informed. If a storm is approaching, continually assess the weather. If a thunderstorm warning is issued and lightning is evident, consider stopping works and leaving the location.

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to handle. Apply first aid immediately if you are qualified to do so. Get emergency help promptly.

Being struck by lightning is a form of electric shock; it should be treated the same way as per standard first aid training.

Further information

- All Safety Alerts issued can be [found here](#).
- For further information please contact Kieran Riches, Corporate WHS Manager on kriches@artc.com.au or 02 8259 0722.