Ice Age National Scenic Trail
"TAILGATE SAFETY SERIES"

THUNDERSTORM SAFETY

Thunderstorms cause significant hazards for hikers and trail crews, including lightning strikes and wind downbursts which can topple trees. Trail workers and users should keep appraised of weather forecasts throughout the day, and become familiar with signs of a developing storm. Large buildups of Cumulonimbus clouds ("cotton ball" clouds, especially those with dark coloration, and flattened or "anvil" shaped tops) are signs of a potential thunderstorm. A sudden reversal in wind direction, a noticeable rise in wind speed, and a sharp drop in temperature may note the mature stage of a storm. Heavy rain, hail and lightning can occur in the mature stage of a thunderstorm. During a storm, use the following guidelines:

- Do not lie down
    - The best position is sitting on a day-pack (only those without metal frames or components) or crouching with feet close together
    - Avoid sitting directly on the ground, if possible; but, if necessary, keep feet and buttocks close together
    - Avoid grouping together—keep a minimum of 15 feet between people when possible

- Cell phones or hand held radios (with short rubber antennas) are safe to use. Do not use phones or radios with elevated antennas

- Wide, open spaces are better places to shelter than trees or near clumps of trees. Ridge tops or other high places should be avoided

- If you feel the hair on your arms or head "stand up," there is a high probability of a lightning strike in the vicinity. Crouch or sit on a day-pack (without metal frame)

- Put down all tools, and distance yourself from them if possible

- Take shelter in vehicles whenever possible

References:

Incident Response Pocket Guide—PMS 461, NFES 1077, NWCG, http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/pubs.htm

Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations, Interagency, www.nifc.gov/references/index.html

Six Minutes for Safety, http://www.nifc.gov/sixminutes/dsp_sixminutes.php