



## Roaming Rocky Podcast Script

### Lightning Safety

Hello, I'd like to talk to you today for a couple minutes about lightning safety in Rocky Mountain National Park. You know, lightning is a big issue in this park.

We are a very vertical park. We have altitudes ranging from about 7,500 up to over 14,000 feet. Always people associate Florida with being this big lightning mecca. It has the highest frequency of lightning in the entire United States. Well, here in Rocky Mountain National Park according to a recent study by the National Lightning Safety Institute, we have possibly the area of highest density in the entire United States-highest density of lightning strikes.

We always want to make sure that everyone is prepared by giving them a couple quick lightning tips. Mainly we always tell folks to hike early. Don't get out in the middle of the day and be climbing up above tree line or in any exposed areas.

If you're out in an open area hiking, or even if you're on the roads and you are in an area where you see lightning coming, you need to stay in your vehicle. The best way to stay safe out in the park during a lightning storm is inside your vehicle, because the metal skin of your car will actually protect you. Rubber tires have almost nothing to do with safety during a lightning storm. Lightning will tend to flash over the surface of your car, if you're in a car, and protect you. But you do need to keep your windows rolled up.

And we've had injuries here in the park from a clear, blue sky day like today. You always do get a warning though. You can hear thunder rolling off in the distance. Even when lightning strikes out of the clear, blue sky, you've always gotten a warning in the form of thunder way off in the distance. So the moral of that story is if you don't want to be a "crispy critter" always seek shelter during a lightning storm when you hear thunder.

And if you hear thunder off in the distance and you can't get into any type of shelter, the last thing you want to do is stand under a tall tree. The positive energy that carries along with the storm is most profound in protruding objects. So you don't want to be under a tall tree during a lightning storm or under a tall rock overhang. You want to get down below tree line or under the trees where all the trees are about the average size or average height. You don't want to be the tallest thing around and you don't want to be underneath the tallest thing around. That's where you're most vulnerable to lightning strikes.

Now, if you are in an area where you can't seek shelter in a car or a vehicle or down in a low-lying area under some common-sized trees, then what can you do? Can you do anything? Well, yes, you can. There are a couple of things that you can help do, and I've actually had this happen to me four times. And I have utilized this technique, and it has saved my life four times. If you hear lightning off in the distance, you see lightning and you hear thunder, you want to go ahead and squat down as quickly as you can. Again, you don't want to be the tallest thing around in case lightning is nearby. If you squat down, you're greatly minimizing your chances of being struck.

The other thing you want to do, taking into consideration that lightning tends to travel across the surface of the earth. If it strikes in an open area, it can travel up to 100 yards by the way, over the surface of the earth. You don't want it to travel up one side of your body, through your heart, and out the other leg. You want to put both feet together, and that way you won't allow lightning to make a circuit through your body which could actually ultimately end up in you going into cardio arrest if you were struck. If you put both feet together, squat down low, you have a really good chance of surviving a lightning strike by the lightning tending to flash over you.

Now just prior to a lightning strike, or an immanent lightning strike, oftentimes you'll hear this sound that sounds like bacon sizzling next to your ear. You don't want to hear that. That's a very serious sound. It also means that the positive energy from the storm is actually traveling past your ears trying to reach toward the cloud and connect together and create a lightning bolt right through your body.

Hopefully you'll survive from that. I've done that four times. It's helped keep me alive. So, it's just a great safety lesson any time you're out in areas where you're exposed to lightning.

On behalf of your National Park Service, thanks for listening.

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**Park information is available at 970-586-1206 or on-line at [www.nps.gov/romo](http://www.nps.gov/romo)**

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