

Here are some safety tips that can apply to anyone who is near the water.

Lightning Safety Tips for Boaters

Sudden squalls are a common hazard for [boaters](#). Lightning-producing thunderstorms can occur at any time, but are most likely from July through mid-September. Storms can trap boaters on the water too far from shore to seek safe shelter, placing them at risk of being struck by lightning.

Every year, an average of 58 people die in the U.S. from lightning strikes and another 300 to 500 are injured, according to the National Weather Service website. Lightning poses a serious risk to [boaters](#). Usually the tallest object on an open body of water, boats are apt to attract lightning during a storm. Tall-masted sailboats are particularly vulnerable. A direct lightning strike can severely damage or destroy a boat, cause serious onboard fires, overload electronic and navigation equipment, and injure, even kill, passengers.

To stay safe while boating, remember the slogan: “If you can see it, flee it; if you can hear it, clear it.” At the first sign of a developing thunderstorm, boaters should head for shore and seek shelter in a building or car. Lightning can travel up to 10 miles from storm centers. A blue sky overhead is no guarantee that danger isn’t lurking. Many lightning deaths occur ahead of storm systems before rain reaches the area.

Follow the **30-30 rule** to decrease your risk of being struck by lightning:

1. When you see a flash of lightening, start counting until you hear thunder. If the count is 30 seconds or less, lightning is close enough to strike.
2. Wait 30 minutes after the last lightning flash before leaving shelter to be certain the danger is gone. Half of all lightning deaths occur *after* a storm passes.