**Tragic lightning strike claims young lives during river swim
South Africa**

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In a heart-wrenching tragedy, a lightning strike claimed the lives of two teenage friends who were swimming in a river in Limpopo, shedding light on the desperate need for safe swimming havens.

The tight-knit community of Makgodu Village, nestled in Limpopo’s Capricorn district, is reeling from a catastrophic loss.

They blame the absence of a public swimming pool and other recreational facilities for the deaths of 12-year-old Tebogo Mofumadi and his friend Boitumelo Tshabalala, aged 13.

Their friends, who were injured by the lightning strike, called for help and a community search party was set up with the help of the police before the two bodies were brought to the surface.

Speaking to Scrolla.Africa, resident Maria Motloung said the river is a popular site for young boys who want to learn how to swim.

“We don’t have swimming facilities in the area so young people use streams and rivers to swim.

“We have over the years tried to caution them against this but there isn’t much we can do as they go on to swim when they are in the field herding animals,” she said.

Another resident, Lawrence Mosotho, said he hopes the incident will push political leaders to speed up service delivery in the area.

“We are also the residents of this country and deserve services like other communities. We cannot continue losing our children in incidents that could have been avoided,” he said.

Limpopo police spokesperson, Colonel Malesela Ledwaba, said the three survivors of the lightning strike were rushed to a hospital and were still being treated.

“The circumstances surrounding the incident are being investigated and the cause of the deaths will be determined by the post-mortem results.”

The officer called on communities to be extra cautious during the rainy season.

“We are urging parents to take extra care of their children and not allow them to swim without adult supervision to guard against drowning.

“We are aware of people who go to the rivers and streams for various reasons, including spiritual or religious ones, and we urge them to be extra careful as the rivers are overflowing and can be dangerous,” he said.

Wits University says it is not known how many people in South Africa die because of lightning strikes, although the estimates lie between 100 and 140 people per year.

A study taken by the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health in 2022 found that South Africa ranks in the top 45 countries for the most deaths caused by drowning.

The study found that black people are more than 50% more likely to die by drowning than white people.

The authors of the study blamed high rates of drowning on insufficient water safety awareness and education campaigns, and a lack of basic swimming lessons available to the poorest in society.