

## 12 killed by lightning in KZN (KwaZulu-Natal) South Africa

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/12-killed-by-lightning-in-kzn-1819083>

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*Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube and the Zululand District Deputy Mayor Ester Qwabe visiting the families of the seven people who were killed by the lightning on Saturday 14.02.15 Mduduzi Khoza explains the incident and pointing the marks that were left by the lightning attack on the wall.*

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Durban

Twelve deaths by lightning at the weekend, including nine people seeking shelter in a rondavel with a tin roof, brought to 18 the number of lightning fatalities in KwaZulu-Natal in less than a month.

According to Zululand district deputy mayor, Esther Qwabe, the nine victims had sought refuge at a Khoza homestead in the Nongoma area, where they were attending a traditional function hosted by the Khoza family.

Relatives Mboneni Khoza, 47, brothers Mfaniseni, 23, and Hlanganani Ntshangase, 32, relatives Themba Zulu, 55 and Thembinkosi Zulu, 21, and Mfaniseni Nene, 36, were killed when they took shelter from a storm under a corrugated iron roof.

The identities of three more had not been made available, said Qwabe. Two of them had died later in hospital.

Seventeen people in the same rondavel sustained injuries. They were treated at Benedictine Hospital and discharged.

Soon after this incident, two more people were struck dead by lightning in Bhanganoma, also near Nongoma, while another person was killed and 12 injured in a lightning strike in Mbazwana in the same municipality. Their identities were not made available.

Late last month six people were struck by lightning in separate incidents in Colenso, near Ladysmith and in the Vryheid area.

In Colenso a 46-year-old mother, her nine-year-old daughter and her 10-year-old niece died when lightning struck the house they were in.

In the Vryheid area, two women aged between 70 and 80, and a man, believed to be in his sixties, were killed.

Three other women sustained serious injuries.

In Saturday's tragedies, Nkosentsha Ntshangase, a neighbour of the Khoza family, said it started out hot but in the afternoon the weather suddenly changed to overcast.

"As the thick black clouds gathered, about 26 people ran into the rondavel. Four of those people were my family members. Two of them were killed and the other two survived.

"Two Khoza relatives died. The rondavel and the victims were not burnt but their bodies had taken a different shape and colour," said the distraught Ntshangase, who is also the family spokesman for the Khozas. He said incidents such as this were not common in the area, and that it would take time for the families to get over the deaths.

Qwabe said: "It is a sad reality that these things happen. We cry with the families. We need to try and exercise some caution in hot weather with sudden gathering of black clouds.

"People should sit down, no activity (should take place) in the house, windows must be opened and there should not be a large group in one room," Qwabe said.

She said they were returning to the families on Monday to install lightning conductors at the homes of the victims' families.

The rods, according to KZN government official, Senzelwe Mzila, could cost about R8 000 for a 26m conductor.

"The rod must be taller than the house, any other structure in the yard or trees. In the case of rondavels, a household could require about 16m of the rod. These are found in local hardware stores," Mzila said.

Jan Vermeulen, senior forecaster at the national weather service in Cape Town, said lightning had been expected in parts of KZN at the weekend.

He said it was dangerous for a group of people to gather in one room during storms. Vermeulen said lightning always entered a structure from the highest point – hence the advisability of conductors.

Co-operative Governance MEC, Nomusa Dube-Ncube, visited the families yesterday. She said: “We are shocked as this incident comes hot on the heels of another lightning incident which left six people dead in the area of Colenso and Paulpietersburg.

“Our expert teams are working around the clock to assist the affected individuals and families.”

She urged people to install lightning conductors.

Dube-Ncube said the province would help the families in preparing for the funerals. Conductors would also be installed in the homes of the victims.

She said counselling was being arranged for the families.