

LIGHTNING KILLS TWO TEENS IN KZN (South Africa)

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KwaZulu-Natal

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In **IOL NEWS**



Durban - Two more people have been killed by lightning - within hours of nine other victims being laid to rest in Nongoma, northern KwaZulu-Natal.

The latest incident happened near Melmoth. A total of 20 people have been killed by lightning in the province since the beginning of the year.

A Grade 10 pupil, Sthembiso Samkelo Ncanana, 17, died on the way to hospital on Saturday and Nkosinathi Khunde Magwaza, 18, died on the spot.

The boys, both from Yanguye, near Melmoth, were at the local stadium when a bolt of lightning struck a large crowd after a soccer match.

Sthembiso had been playing soccer at the time and Nkosinathi had been a spectator.

Grieving for Sthembiso, his brother-in-law, Ncengeni Ntanzi, told the Daily News on Sunday that the teen's clothes had been ripped, his body had turned pale and was covered in blisters.

"He had been wearing his school uniform after he attended school earlier before playing soccer with other boys in the area," Ntanzi said.

Khiphenkulu Thangalengane Magwaza, the distraught father of Nkosinathi, said he was at a funeral when his brother-in-law unexpectedly turned up to offer him a lift back home.

“I was not suspicious at all. But I was happy he had saved me a long journey back home as the dark clouds had gathered in the sky,” he said.

“Before we could enter the gate, he stopped the car and told me to be brave before breaking the news.”

But the reality struck when Magwaza was welcomed by loud shrieks and he saw children rolling on the ground crying hysterically.

His eldest daughter, Hlengiwe, who was at home when a neighbour came running to deliver the news, said it was difficult to cope.

“I cannot believe he is gone forever. I will always miss his jokes,” she said.

According to Mthonjaneni mayor, Maureen Ndlangamandla, nine other boys were taken to KwaMagwaza Hospital.

Six were discharged late on Saturday and three were recovering well and she expected them to be discharged soon.

“We were in a meeting when the sad news was delivered. We had to rush to the deceased’s families. This morning (Sunday), we visited the hospital and were told that others had been discharged,” she said.

The incident happened on the same day that nine victims of last weekend’s lightning tragedy were laid to rest during a mass funeral service at Nongoma attended by Premier Senzo Mchunu and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube.

Mchunu said when he saw their coffins and their grieving families, he was deeply moved.

In a statement later, he expressed shock at the weekend deaths.

“Clearly KwaZulu-Natal is under severe strain where we do not escape lightning disaster during summer season. The intensity of it now and a growing number of victims, is of great concern,” Mchunu said.

Dube-Ncube said: “We will continue to roll out lightning conductors to areas that are prone to lightning.”

She appealed to people who could afford them to buy them at hardware shops.

Cogta spokesman, Lennox Mabaso, said on Sunday that communities could club together and pool their resources to buy lightning conductors, as together, they stood a greater chance of getting a discount.

Twelve people were killed by lightning in Nongoma two weeks ago. Six were killed in Colenso last month.