**Zimbabwe: Lightning Bolts Kill 3 in Gokwe**

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*By Midlands Bureau*

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Three people, including a pregnant woman were killed by lightning bolts in separate incidents in Gokwe South.

Chief Njelele of Gokwe, who confirmed the deaths that occurred under his jurisdiction, said some of his superstitious subjects were now living in fear and were calling for a cleansing ceremony after similar deaths were recorded in the area last year.

Last year, two people were killed by lightning bolts under Chief Njelele, prompting the traditional leader to institute an inquiry into the incident. Over 25 cattle belonging to two families were also killed in a single lightning strike in Gokwe South last year and Chief Njelele had to order the burning of the carcases after some villagers had started feasting on them.

In the latest incident, Chief Njelele said a 26-year-old woman was walking on a footpath and was struck and killed by a bolt of lightning on Monday afternoon.

"What is puzzling is that it was not raining, we had only received some showers the previous day, so the villagers are failing to accept that someone can be struck by a bolt of lightning under such circumstances. Maybe it is because we do not know the science behind lightning," he said.

Chief Njelele said two other deaths were recorded last week due to lightning.

"My subjects are demanding that we conduct a cleansing ceremony because they suspect there is something abnormal. I have however, been made to understand that one victim was of a villager who was putting on some headphones ,so apart from conducting a cleansing ceremony, we need to educate our subjects on safety measures during the rainy season," he said.

Most people and almost all livestock killed by lightning are killed indirectly, although some are the discharge point.

Rather a nearby discharge, and the main energy of a lightning strike is from the ground to the cloud, creates a very strong static electric field around the discharge point and that in turn can allow a fatal flow of current.

This is why experts no long advise people to lie on the ground during a thunderstorm, but rather squat close together to minimise being struck, and leave a little gap between body extremities, to minimise the effects of any electric field.