**World: Highest Mortality Due to Lightning**

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| **Record Value** | 469 individuals |
| **Date of Record** | 2 / 11 (Nov) 1994 |
| **Formal WMO Review** | Yes |
| **Length of Record** | 1873 to present |
| **Instrumentation** | Documented reports; |
| **Geospatial Location** | Dronka, Egypt [27.2°N; 31.0°E; elevation: 78.6m (258ft)] |

https://wmo.asu.edu/content/world-highest-mortality-lightning

References

Cerveny et al. 2017: WMO Assessment of Weather and Climate Mortality Extremes: Lightning, Tropical Cyclones, Tornadoes, and Hail, Climate Weather and Society,

Discussion

The tragedy near Dronka (alternatively Durunka), Egypt, on 2 November, 1994: During a set of very severe thunderstorms over the area that caused much damage and flash flooding, a flash of lightning ignited three oil storage tanks each holding about 5,000 tons of aircraft or diesel fuel. These tanks were located on a railway line that subsequently collapsed as floodwaters built up behind it. The fuel caught fire from the lightning strike and the floodwaters swept the blazing fuel into the village, killing a very large number of people. The immediate news coverage after the Dronka event contained a number of death tolls, ranging from 200 to over 500. For example, Chris Hedges of the New York Times (2 November 1994) reported that “At least 200 people were killed today in southern Egypt when an explosion and floods sent blazing fuel racing through the streets of a small village.” Similarly, Bahaa Elkoussy of UPI (United Press International) reported on 2 November 1994 that “Egyptian security and press sources said the latest tally of deaths caused by an oil depot fire and torrential rains on Wednesday reached 292 people in two southern provinces, and many more were injured.” Immediately after the event, there was a wide range in estimated deaths. Grazulis (1997) noted that “On November 2, 1994, 430 people were killed in southern Egypt when lightning struck an army fuel depot. About 15,000 tons of blazing fuel, resembling napalm, flooded the village of Durunka, a village of 10,000 people.” Conversely, Torres-Sanchez (2002) cited that 530 people were killed in Dronka, Egypt, when lightning struck a petroleum tank. A number of studies after the year 2000 cite a specific number, 469 dead, but give no reference for that value (e.g., Ash, 2006; Evans, 2008; Fagel, 2011). A significant reason for the wide variation in death toll numbers is the discrimination (or lack thereof) between deaths associated with the oil tank fire and those associated with flash flooding from the severe thunderstorms which caused the lightning. Fortunately, one of the WMO committee members uncovered an official document from the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population dating to that time period that reads in part (in Arabic translated to English): “Health sector officials said that hospitals in the region had received 469 bodies from the stricken village of Dronka. Security sources said the floods caused by the storm killed [an additional] 63 people in Assiut and neighboring provinces.”