**Do more to stop lightning from killing people – Uganda**

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By Editor

Our view: We call upon the government to prioritise installing lightning arresters, not only in schools but in all public buildings. The government must also ensure that privately-owned buildings, be they residential or commercial, are secured against lightning.

Uganda is a lightning hotspot, especially during the rainy season. Over the years, several people countrywide have lost their lives and others have been injured in lightning strikes. A series of deadly lightning strikes have killed 10 people and injured more than 70 others since January 2025. In July 2024, 79 people, including 77 primary school children, were struck by lightning during an inter-school sports competition at Oweko Primary School. In another tragic incident on November 2, 2024, lightning struck a food distribution centre at Palabek Refugee Settlement, killing 14 people and injuring 34 others. Many of the lightning strike incidents could have been avoided if the victims were informed about safety precautions. Some had the misfortune of being in buildings that did not have lightning arresters.

Some of these victims were school children and their teachers compelled to take shelter in classroom blocks without the legally-mandated lightning arresters. Many buildings in schools, both government-owned and private ones, do not have lightning arresters, endangering the lives of their occupants and those in their vicinity.  This anomaly is also rampant in residential houses, private commercial and government-owned buildings.  We commend the Ministry of Education and Sports for pledging to scale up lightning protection efforts in schools across the country. However, this should be done with the urgency it deserves. The government’s track record of unfilled and or delayed pledges should not extend to this life-saving intervention.  We call upon the government to prioritise installing lightning arresters, not only in schools but in all public buildings. The government must also ensure that privately-owned buildings, be they residential or commercial, are secured against lightning.

The authorities should consider subsidising the cost of lighting arresters or reducing taxes on the life-saving apparatuses to make it more cost-friendly. Furthermore, the authorities must increase efforts to educate the public on lightning safety. Creating awareness about what to do and what not to do in seasons of lightning will save lives, as many Ugandans are still ignorant about how the natural phenomenon occurs. Uninformed and misguided beliefs where some attribute lightning to sorcery, among other unreasonable beliefs, hinders their efforts to protect themselves. Others still do not know that it is risky to take shelter under trees when it is raining. All means of communication: social media, radio, television, print media and community meetings should be utilised to ensure public safety.