

Lightning strikes rifle, man in ICU

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Welkom - A man from Pretoria is in the intensive care unit at Welkom Medi-Clinic after being struck by lightning on a game farm outside the city over the weekend.

Andries Wolmarans and his friends were on the back of a bakkie on Saturday when the weapon he was holding was presumably struck by lightning.

Theunis Nel, an attorney who sat next to Wolmarans on the back of the bakkie, says everything happened very quickly.

"I heard one helluva crash. At first I thought the weapon had gone off. I felt a strange feeling going through my body.

Bleeding from ears

"For a few seconds I had no idea what was going on, but I came to my senses when I heard someone yelling at Andries."

Nel says Wolmarans was still on the back of the bakkie, but it looked like he was shaking from the shock.

"Then blood started running out of his ears."

The bakkie didn't work after the lightning strike. They phoned the owner of the farm for help and rushed Wolmarans to the hospital.

Wolmarans was still in the intensive care unit on Monday afternoon, where he was treated for bleeding on the brain, irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) and burst eardrums, among other things. He also has burn wounds on his body.

His wife, Elmien, says he's feeling better and was able to eat and speak on Monday, but can't hear.

"He can't remember what happened either."

Clothes shredded

Nel says the doctors explained that someone who is struck by lightning is treated just like someone who's had a heart attack.

It appears that the lightning hit his rifle, since there are burn marks on both the scope and rifle.

"Andries's clothes were shredded. The cap he was wearing was picked up next to the bakkie in three or four pieces. It was a horrible sound."

According to Nel, some say the fact that they were sitting on the bakkie saved their lives because the bakkie's rubber tyres acted as a conductor.

"That might be the truth, I don't know. It was one helluva crash."