

## Lightning kills Pretoria woman

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An inconsolable Cheslyn Sampson tells how his mother died right next to him. (Craig Nieuwenhuizen, Beeld)

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Virginia Keppler, Beeld

Pretoria - A 34-year-old man from Eersterust, in the east of Pretoria, is inconsolable after lightning struck his mother right beside him. Topsy Warney, 58, died instantly when she was struck by lightning on Sunday afternoon. Her oldest son, 34-year-old Cheslyn Sampson, and 10-year-old Jo-Ann Letsoala lay unconscious not far from her.

The three of them and Warney's other son, 23-year-old Johnathan Warney, had enjoyed lunch together at Johnathan's house in Rangers Avenue in Eersterust. "We had such a nice time, it was so special. My mother was glowing and extremely happy," Sampson said. He was walking home with his mother and Jo-Ann at about 17:45, when it started raining. "We were soaked to the bone and Johnathan even phoned to hear whether we were home yet. "The lightning struck just after I finished speaking to him."

### I couldn't move

They were walking on the pavement in Hans Coverdale Road North and passed under a tree when lightning struck. "I was unconscious for a moment and when I woke up, all three of us were lying on the ground. I wanted to jump up and run, but I couldn't move the right side of my body. My mom lay bleeding with her face in the ground. "I was so confused I didn't know if I should pick her up. I was too scared to touch her so I ran with Jo-Ann to my aunt's house nearby."

A severely shocked Jo-Ann said: "Auntie Topsy fell. The lightning burnt Auntie Topsy's clothes in the front." Sampson's Bible, which his brother had given him that very same day, lay nearby. "I told my brother it's been a long time since I read the Bible. He gave me a brand-new Bible."

According to Sampson, it's as if his mother knew she was going to die, since she had often spoken about death lately and mentioned wanting to get her affairs and a policy in order. "We've also been very close lately. I shared all my deepest secrets with her."

A few flowers marked the scene on Monday. There is a hole where the lightning hit the pavement.

"I feel privileged and satisfied that I could be with my mother until the very end," Sampson said.