

Lightning bolts kill man and 3 donkeys in Zimbabwe

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The Chronicle (Zimbabwe)

Fri, 28 Oct 2016 09:48 UTC

A man and three donkeys died after they were struck by lightning in two incidents in Matabeleland North. A bolt of lightning fatally struck Charles Maponda (32) of Nyamandlovu in Umguza District while he was looking for firewood in a bush on Tuesday. Maponda, a recently promoted farm employee at Wayne Manroe's Farm, knocked off duty and left alone to fetch firewood in the bush.

Mr Robert Muthethwa, who is a security guard at the Farm, discovered the badly burnt body minutes after he had been struck. "It started to rain and there was thunder and lightning. I found Maponda in an open space. It looked like he had just been struck by lightning. "He had sustained serious burns on his right foot, right thigh and forehead. His clothes and the gumboots that he wore had been burnt too," he said. Mr Muthethwa said he informed other farm workers who reported the matter to the police and the body was conveyed to the United Bulawayo Hospitals (UBH) for postmortem.

Meanwhile, Mr Ephraim Ngwenya (32) of Ngonyama Village, ward 3 in Tsholotsho also lost three donkeys after lightning struck them in his garden. He told *The Chronicle* that he was still in shock. "It's like they had been set alight. We saw the lightning strike once and we saw smoke come from the garden. The donkeys died. "I, however thank the Lord that my family remained safe indoors. One can never avoid such incidents whether indoors or outside. We pray for protection and the safety of human lives during this rainy season," said Mr Ngwenya. Village head Johnson Ncube of Ngamo village urged villagers to stay calm indoors during the rainy season, which has just started. "It is scary to think these are the first rains and they have already killed humans and livestock. "People shouldn't stand under trees when it's raining and they should install tall copper poles in their homesteads to divert the lightning bolts," he said.

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