

Lightning kills primary pupil, 22 injured [Swaziland]

By MBONGISENI NDZIMANDZE on October 05, 2011

MPOFU - A pupil from Mpofu Methodist Primary School died and 22 were rushed to hospital after being struck by lightning on Monday.

Tanele Sifundza (14) who was doing Grade VI died on the spot while her colleagues were rushed to Mkhuzweni Health Centre. Sifundza and her colleagues were on their way home after school when the lightning struck. The school Principal Mic-hael Dlamini, confirmed the matter. He said it was after school when they received information that some of the pupils had been struck by lightning.

Helplessly

"We then rushed to the scene and we discovered the pupils lying helplessly on the ground and one of them was already dead. Efforts were made to resuscitate her but she was already gone," he said. He said they discovered that her shoes were torn apart and she had a lump in her throat. Dlamini said usually they release the pupils early if they suspect there will be heavy rainfall, but on Monday there were no signs of such. He said the pupils who were struck by lightning were walking as a group when the incident occurred and it is suspected that Sifundza was leading them. The shocked principal said the other pupils were rushed to the hospital by a Good Samaritan where they were treated and discharged. "We are still shocked as we did not foresee that a storm was coming. When the pupils left the school there were no signs that there might be lightning or that it was going to rain," he said. Yesterday teachers went to Sifundza's family to pass their condolences.

Twin

She was a twin and her twin sister attends the same school. One of the residents said it was the first time that lightning struck and claimed a life in the area.

MBABANE – According to experts, many people wait far too long to get to a safe place when lightning starts to strike.

According to the United States of America's National Weather Service, these delayed actions cause large amounts of deaths and injuries each year.

Risk

According to Wisdom Dlamini, Director of Parks at the Swaziland National Trust Commission, who gave a public lecture on lightning earlier this year, people are most at risk of getting struck by lightning in the following circumstances. Read his information on lightning in the country and follow the experts' advice on how to protect yourself from getting struck below.

Know when you are at risk

Lightning occurs mostly in the summer months from September to May and peaks in December and January.

Statistically, people between the ages of 10 and 40 are most likely to be hit.

I 90 per cent of lightning fatalities, when people die, happen in rural areas

I Swaziland is the country with the most people hit per million people every year. 15.5 people are, on average, killed by lightning in the country every year. Zimbabwe is the second most-struck country in the world, according to a study done in the 1980s.

I Lightning strikes occur most often in the Highveld and Upper Middleveld.

I Information by Wisdom Dlamini, Director of Parks at the Swaziland National Trust Commission after a study done. His findings are preliminary and yet to be investigated.

What to do when lightning strikes

- 1. Cancel or postpone activities early if thunderstorms are expected.**
- 2. Find shelter in a building. A safe building is one that is fully enclosed with a roof, walls and floor, and has plumbing or wiring like homes, schools, churches, hotels, office buildings or shopping centres.**
- 3. Find shelter in some motor vehicle types. A safe vehicle is any fully enclosed metal-topped vehicle. Do not use electronic devices such as a radio during a thunderstorm. Unsafe vehicles include golf carts, convertibles, motorcycles or bicycles.**
- 4. Stay away from showers, sinks, bath tubs, and electronic equipment such as stoves, radios, corded telephones and computers.**
- 5. Try to avoid using open garages, covered porches or sheds.**
- 6. If someone is struck by lightning, they may need immediate medical attention. Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to touch. Call an ambulance or hospital as soon as possible.**