

Lightning kills two in KZN [South Africa]

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By Anelisa Kubheka

KwaZulu-Natal - The new year began on a sad note for two Bergville families who each lost a son after being struck by lightning on New Year's Eve.

Seventeen-year-old Nhlakanipho Gamede and Phelelani Mlangeni, 23, each died in different parts of Bergville during Monday's storm.

More than 100 houses in two areas were damaged by the storm and another young man hit by lightning survived.

Nhlakanipho, a Grade 10 pupil at Tshanibezwe High School, died while being taken to a nearby clinic after being hit by lightning while herding his family's cow back home from the fields.

"(Nhlakanipho) was with another boy when it happened.

"The boy came rushing home to tell us," said Nhlakanipho's mother, Misizwe Gamede.

She said the boy told how Nhlakanipho fell to the ground and did not move after the bolt of lightning struck .

"Neighbours and some of our relatives rushed to where the two boys had been and they took him to the clinic, but he died on the way."

Gamede said the family had planned to slaughter a sheep for New Year's Eve, but these plans were abandoned after the news of Nhlakanipho's death.

In the other tragedy, Phelelani Mlangeni, who on Friday had returned home from Germiston, where he works, had slaughtered a goat giving thanks to his ancestors for his employment.

"The last time I saw him was on New Year's Eve morning when he told me he was going to town," said Mlangeni's father, Bonginkosi Mlangeni.

At midnight, the father stood outside and watched as his neighbours let off fireworks to usher in the new year.

"I had assumed (Phelelani) was somewhere with his friends.

"After midnight I went inside to pray and then went to bed," he said.

Mlangeni said he was awoken by one of the neighbours on Tuesday morning who told him that someone had seen a body lying under a tree and thought it was Phelelani.

"We went to the tree, that had been struck by lightning and lying face down under it was Phelelani."

The area (Ward 4) councillor, Zodwa Dubuzane, said about 50 houses in the area had been affected by the storm and that one other person was also struck by lightning, but had survived.

"A 20-year-old man was struck by lightning and was taken to the clinic. He is not hurt badly but he now has trouble hearing.

Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs spokesman, Vernon Mchunu, said the Msinga area had also been badly affected by the storm and about 54 houses had been damaged.

"This figure is from a preliminary assessment. A full report of the damage will be compiled."