

Northern Cape

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Six injured by lightning

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Six men from Postmasburg were struck by lightning last Wednesday night in a wave of thunderstorms affecting the Northern Cape, North West and Free State provinces.

Five men were transported by ER24 paramedics to the Kathu Mediclinic and a 21-year-old man was taken to Postmasburg Hospital.

Three men were immediately discharged, one was kept overnight and discharged on Friday, and the fifth man was transferred to Kimberley Mediclinic and is in a stable condition. The sixth man, according to health department spokesperson Lulu Mxekezo, was discharged after observation and treatment.

The SA Weather Service reported that thunderstorms are set to continue over the whole of central South Africa for the next week. Thunderstorms were predicted between Postmasburg and Douglas at the weekend and were developing in the southern part of the province yesterday.

According to the weather service, a 30% chance of thundershowers is predicted until Wednesday, and temperatures are set to peak in the lower 30s until then.

Temperatures are set to reach a maximum of 33°C by tomorrow and Wednesday.

The thunderstorms are reportedly normal for this time of the year.

Ronnel Khumalo, provincial communications officer of the Red Cross, warned people not to take thunderstorms lightly because they were a common occurrence.

"Unfortunately many people are not aware of the deadly force of lightning. Lightning can strike from as far as 10km away from the area of the thunderstorm, so watch the skies and be aware of the weather conditions," Khumalo said. "A good rule of thumb is if you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance of lightning."

The weather service stressed the importance of finding shelter before a storm hits. A shelter that insulates individuals from lightning is generally closed and has some sort of plumbing or wiring throughout, grounding it from the top of the roof to the bottom.

To remain safe indoors, people are advised to unplug the telephone and all other unnecessary appliances, avoiding running water, turn off the air conditioner and draw the blinds in case a window breaks.