SB02-033

FIELD LIGHTNING PROTECTION

Approximately 360,000 bolts of lightning bombard the earth every hour. It can be devastating, spectacular and unpredictable. More than 600 persons in the U.S. are killed each year from being struck by lightning. The most common military activities that result in lightning strikes to soldiers are using field phones, electrical equipment, computers, switchboards, and radios. Following these basic safety rules while in the field will help save your life when lightning threatens:

1. When an electrical storm is approaching, cease outside training and move personnel into a building, dense woods, ditch, ravine, or the foot of a hill (move to low ground).
2. If in a vehicle, except vehicles without hard tops, stay in the vehicle and take down the antenna. Dismount from open equipment such as dozers or graders and move at least 100 feet away.
3. Stay away from wire fences, isolated trees, small structures or tents, antennas, metal pipes, tools, equipment and other metallic objects that could carry lightning to you.
4. Get out and away from open water.
5. Discontinue use of electrical equipment of any kind, especially phones and radios with antenna extended.
6. Discontinue demolition activities and refueling or handling flammables, when lightning is within five miles of a location.
7. When marching in formation, double the interval between soldiers. Avoid grouping together. If you feel your hair stand on end (an indication that lightning is about to strike), drop to your knees and bend forward putting your hand on your knees. Do not lie flat on the ground or place your hands on the ground.
8. Ground all of your equipment (i.e. Kevlar helmet, ALICE pack, weapons, knives, radios, and any other metal or electrical equipment). Remove any metallic objects from clothing.

Final Tips

- Have a lightning plan.
- Suspend activity for 30 minutes after last observed strike.
- Injured persons do not carry an electrical charge and can be handled safely.

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