

Lightning Task Force of Colorado

The inaugural meeting of the Lightning Task Force of Colorado was held at St. Anthony Hospital on February 7, 1992. The luncheon meeting started at 11:30 am and ended at about 12:50 pm. Those in attendance were:

Ronald L. Holle	NOAA
Raul E. Lopez, Ph.D.	NOAA
Ronal W. Larson, Ph.D.	EMA
Terence Rudolph	EMA
Charles R. Wright	Public Service
Kathy Butzin	St. A
Jodi Chambers, M.D.	St. A
Michael Cherington, M.D.	St. A
Deb Clark	St. A
Ray Coniglio	St. A
Matthew Fulton	St. A
W. Peter Vellman, M.D.	St. A

All present were in agreement that this Task Force could play an important role in time in several areas, including: data collection to learn more about actual numbers of lightning victims in Colorado; educational functions for directors of outdoor activities (golf, mountain climbers, etc.); study damage to materials and structures; look into prevention measures and protective garments.

The project that will receive our full attention at this time will be a design to collect data on lightning victims in the state of Colorado. Both a retrospective study and a prospective study will be outlined. Dr. Lopez and Mr. Holle presented their data obtained from Storm Data from 1951 to 1987 in Colorado. The victims of lightning strikes were listed by county and type of activity. Since the numbers of patients in the Storm Data databank are in all likelihood short of the actual numbers of victims, a more thorough data collection system is required. In addition, much of the data already listed is lacking in details e.g. many of the activities are listed as "unknown".

The deficiencies with the current system are:

1. Many lightning victims are not reported at all. They may be discharged from an outpatient facility and not recorded in any databank.
2. Many are listed under another diagnosis such as "heart attack, stroke" and lightning is not mentioned.
3. Many are unknown.

Dr. Cherington and Ms. Clark presented a preliminary draft of a questionnaire which could be submitted to EMS and trauma units, sheriff and fire departments, and coroner's office in each of the 65 counties in the state. The data collected could be designed for both a retrospective and prospective study. Dr. Lopez and Mr. Holle suggested that college students and school teachers could

be recruited to do the field work during the summer months. Dr. Chambers suggested that fellows in Public Health programs might also provide valuable help. Dr. Vellman could help in arranging the communication with EMS.

These efforts, when accomplished, will not only provide us with much needed information, but will also begin the process of education of health care workers in the various counties of Colorado. The questionnaire mentioned above asks questions helpful in differentiating lightning victims from other conditions such as head trauma, heart attacks, etc. Some of these clues (e.g. ruptured tympanic membrane, clothing disintegration, etc.) have been highlighted in the literature by Dr. M.A. Cooper.

Mr. Wright will bring to the next meeting information about lightning protection that has been disseminated in the past by Public Service Company.

Mr. Holle sent to me information on the new book "Lightning Injuries: Electrical, Medical, and Legal Aspects" by Andrews, Cooper, Darveniza, and Mackerras. I have enclosed copies of this information for all of you.

I left this meeting with an enormous sense of enthusiasm for our purposes and our group. Since we discussed setting up a regular meeting schedule, I suggest we consider an 11:30 am meeting time at St. Anthony Hospital or alternative place on the first Friday of each month beginning with April.

Please let me know your thoughts on this tentative meeting schedule and on any other matters.

Respectfully submitted:



Michael Cherington, M.D.

Outdoorsman was 'too strong to die'

Newton man struck, killed by lightning

By Lauren McFalls
Staff Writer

Samuel Huntington, president and chief financial officer of a major New England utility company and an outdoors enthusiast who once climbed a 22,000-foot high mountain in Argentina, seemed larger than life to some of his friends.



But what mountains couldn't do to him, lightning did Tuesday, striking the Newton man dead while he was climbing towards a summit over Independence Pass in Colorado.

"You couldn't think of any other way to kill Sam," said Stephen Subrin, a friend of Huntington. "He was too strong to die."

A memorial service will be held for Huntington, 49, who was head of New England Electric System in Westborough. But his wife, Newton School Committee member Jennifer Huntington, is postponing an announcement of the date until she notifies their 21-year-old daughter, Clark.

Reached yesterday afternoon in Aspen, Jennifer Huntington said their daughter is bicycling through Hungary with a friend. Huntington's 24-year-old son, Henry, arrived from Alaska in Aspen yesterday.

Sam and Jennifer Huntington had been staying in Aspen where he was to address an energy policy forum which begins today at the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies.

They had arrived several days early to hike and were above the timberline near a steep and rugged Independence Pass summit when the accident occurred, according to the Pitkin County

Samuel Huntington

Sheriff's office in Aspen.

Huntington could not be revived after a lightning bolt struck him at approximately 1 p.m. Mountain rescue teams and representatives from the sheriff's department pronounced him dead when they arrived at the scene almost two hours later.

Jan Finnegan, a spokesman for the sheriff's office, described the storm as a "standard afternoon thunderstorm." She said the showers are typical of high elevations.

The man claimed by a common Colorado mountain storm was described by friends yesterday as an "astute" businessman with a strong social conscience and keen interest in responsible political action.

A Harvard alumnus and Columbia University Law School graduate, Huntington was one of the few utility executives to strike a balance among business, consumer and environmental concerns relating to the energy industry, friends said.

He was committed to preserving the environment and finding new energy conservation methods and he frequently co-

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February 10, 1992

Mary Ann Cooper, M.D.
Associate Professor and Residency Research
Director, Emergency Medicine Program
University of Illinois
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Dr. Cooper:

Last week several of us met to form the Lightning Task Force of Colorado. We bring different scientific backgrounds and experiences but all share a high degree of enthusiasm regarding the subject of lightning. I am enclosing a copy of the "minutes" of our first meeting which lists all the members of the group.

We would appreciate any thoughts and encouragement you might want to share with us.

I have enjoyed your articles and was especially pleased to see a copy of your new book. Ron Holle brought it for all of us to peruse. I hope to receive my own copy soon.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Cherington, M.D.

cc. Dr. Raul Lopez
Mr. Ronald Holle



ST. ANTHONY HOSPITAL
CENTRAL

PROVENANT HEALTH PARTNERS

Lightning Data Center
4231 West 16th Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80204-1374
303-629-3652

February 10, 1992

Dr. Christopher J. Andrews
148 Jesmond Road
Indooroopilly, Queensland 4068
Australia

Dear Dr. Andrews:

Last week several of us met to form the Lightning Task Force of Colorado. We bring different scientific backgrounds and experiences but all share a high degree of enthusiasm regarding the subject of lightning. I am enclosing a copy of the "minutes" of our first meeting.

We would very much appreciate any thoughts and encouragement you might want to share with us.

I have read and enjoyed your articles and was especially pleased to see a copy of your new book. Ron Holle brought a copy for all of us to peruse. I hope to receive my own copy soon.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Cherington, M.D.

cc. Dr Raul Lopez
Mr Ronald Holle