

LIGHTNING DATA CENTER MEETING
MEETING MINUTES
September 10, 2004
www.Stanthonyldc.org

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"Let conversations cease. Let laughter flee. This is the place, (morgue) where death delights to help the living," wall plaque of Milton Helpern, medical examiner, NYC M.E. office.

Members Present: C. Bark, S. Clark, R. Collier, G. Flanders, R. Keen, N. Mullan, J. Lines, E. Nitka, S. Olson, T. Resignolo, J. Richardson, R. Russon, G. Stewart, P. Yarnell

The meeting was opened with a tribute to the life of Gene Lines, who passed away on 09/09, at age 72. Gene was an esteemed member of the Lightning Data Center. His wife, Joan, honored us with her presence.

I then discussed three cases. The first was a gentleman who corresponded about holding onto a railing with wet hands when a strike of lightning occurred in the vicinity. He has been plagued by ongoing fatigue, coordination dysfunction, sleep disturbance, cognitive disturbance, muscle pain, difficulty with ambulation and sensory complaints. He had been told that laboratory tests were usually not helpful in pointing out the pathophysiologic disturbance, but that this was a syndrome that many people complain of. The second case was that of an electrician who was wet when he suffered a shocking electrical injury from a high 13,200 volt. This went from his index finger into his feet, when he was working on a disconnect box. Apparently, he was curled in a fetal position. A year and a half later, he is left with incapacitating back spasms and dysesthetic pains, and with negative workup, including cardiology and orthopedics. He is able to work, but not at the same intensity. His sleep is also disturbed. It was thought that this may be a myelopathic pain syndrome and reference was made to many patients who have delayed or significant muscle problems after electrical events. A third patient was mentioned who was involved in a lightning strike to the head and suffered a cardiac arrest. This patient is now three months out and functioning normally, except for perhaps decreased aerobic athletic ability.

Our guest speaker was Joann Richardson, B.S. Summit County Coroner, since elected in January of 2003. She has been a paramedic since 1985 and has worked as a clinical investigator as well.

She brought the case of a middle person of a group descending from about 10,600 feet, who walked into a storm to descend in the Breckenridge area. There was lightning around. It was estimated that there were six strikes in two seconds at about the time the lightning strike occurred. The victim and her two companions were walking side by

side on a road, surrounded by trees. The road was open to the sky. The victim showed signs of direct lightning strike. There were no burned trees nearby. The other two in the party were knocked to the ground, one of whom was nine weeks pregnant at the time and who suffered a fractured arm. The other person suffered a shoulder injury and both worse amnestic to the exact event. It was thought that this was a positive strike in a flurry of strikes. The patient fell, hitting her forehead and had a frontal skull fracture beneath a small abrasion. On postmortem, there was traumatic subarachnoid hemorrhage in the posterior parietal area as well. There were burns on her hips, arms and there was a ferning pattern that lasted a prolonged period of time. Apparently, the victims were not wet at the time of the strike, but when the coroner arrived, the ground was wet. A discussion about post traumatic subarachnoid hemorrhage from the fall versus lightning injured brain hemorrhage was had.

Some slides were also seen of positive lightning strike, positive discharges one of which was quite striking, emanating from an anvil cloud and what appeared to be a relatively clear sky. It was commented that anvil clouds are associated with thunderstorms and usually they are not seen as clearly as the picture was, due to the storm conditions.

These minutes do not represent official positions of LDC or its members. They simply reflect the comments of those present.

PLEASE NOTE: October's meeting will be held the **third** Friday of the month (instead of the normal second Friday of the month) and there is a room change also, it will be held in the Birch Room.

Date: Friday, October 15th

Time: 11:30 Roundtable
12:00 Presentation

Guest speaker: Ron Holle, Meteorologist/Consultant with Vaisala, Inc.
from Arizona

Topics: - Behavior factors during recreation deaths and injuries
from lightning - Ron Holle
- Lightning Experiences in Vail, CO area – Eric Holle

Location: Birch Room, which is located on the Ground East floor.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip R. Yarnell, M.D.
PRY/lmb