

LIGHTNING DATA CENTER MINUTES

Denver, CO

June 12, 2026

Monthly Quote: ““There are some kings whom one must not approach too closely, and lightning is one of them.” - Voltaire. The Salt Lake Herald, May 23, 1897.

Members present: Clark, Yarnell, Crow, Langford, Terry and Gertling. The LDC welcomes two new members: Sharon Taylor and Allan Zwick, both of whom are lightning survivors. Meeting began at 11:45 AM and ended at 1:15 PM.

1. The LDC is accepting donations, either as cash or check. If you donate via check, please make your check payable to Steve Clark at 755 S. Clinton Street, #2A; Denver, CO 80247. He will cash the check and keep the cash holdings specifically for the LDC. When the LDC incurs expenses, Steve will pay for services rendered through his bank account using the cash from LDC's cash holdings. A log is maintained detailing the inflow and outflow of monies. The LDC currently has \$889.00 in cash.
2. Mrs. Taylor and her two dogs used to live in the Pacific Northwest, where thunderstorms are much less frequent. She told us of a lightning strike that occurred while she was in the living room of her house near Parker, Colorado. Her house sits on a 6200-foot hill that affords a 360-degree view of the area. Her dogs are terrified when lightning and thunder are present. She heard a sound which she described like an airplane exploding straight up over her house. She added the sound was like a loud metallic scraping. The house shook. Immediately afterwards, she felt a “heaviness” in the air, but did not smell ozone. She called her daughter and told her she was having trouble breathing. The daughter made her call 911. The sheriff was already on his way because he saw the lightning hit a nearby tree. The fire department was called and a thorough inspection of the house showed no damage, no fire and no smoke. A nearby tree was splintered. Two days later, she was still having difficulty breathing, so she went to the ER and was diagnosed with bilateral pulmonary embolism (blood clots in the lungs) and was kept on oxygen while she was in the hospital. When she left the hospital, she was prescribed Eliquis and was told to keep on the oxygen. She was told she will need the blood thinner for the rest of her life and will need the oxygen for only a few weeks.

She was very frustrated with the doctors because they kept telling her that her condition had nothing to do with lightning. They said she may have been predisposed to blood clotting and that the clotting was coincidental. She told one of the doctors that her house did not have to burn down for her to be affected and that lightning can travel hundreds of feet. Furthermore, she said she spent a lot of her life in rugged environments for extended periods of time, which included hiking with a 50-pound backpack on her back.

Steve Clark found an abstract of a medical case discussing a 30-year old man who was struck by lightning and was diagnosed with pulmonary embolism. The abstract to the article is shown below, as the body of the article was written in Spanish only. The abstract states there are no other cases of pulmonary embolism caused by lightning that have been documented in the literature. The citation is in the Lightning Links section below.

Abstract

BACKGROUND: The diagnosis of pulmonary embolism is based primarily on clinical findings and is confirmed by the detection of an embolism on computed tomography pulmonary angiography.

CLINICAL CASE: A 30-year-old male patient, previously healthy, who was admitted to the emergency department after having been impacted by a lightning strike. The patient presented symptoms compatible with the impact of lightning, after the suspected diagnosis of pulmonary embolism, computed tomography pulmonary angiography was performed, confirming thromboembolism near the site of lightning impact. Heparin anticoagulation was started for clinical management, oral anticoagulants were subsequently indicated and discharge was given.

CONCLUSIONS: Despite of no cases of pulmonary thromboembolism related to the impact of lightning have been described in the literature, it should be considered when approaching this type of patients, with unclear symptoms that have to be identified to establish the diagnosis and to treat them in a timely manner.

KEYWORDS: Pulmonary thromboembolism; Lightning injuries; Lung injury.

Ken Langford asked how far away the tree was from the house. Mrs. Taylor will try to find out. *NOTE: Verbal permission was obtained from Mrs. Taylor to use personal identifying information, per HIPAA regulations.*

3. Approximately 12 years ago, Mr. Zwick was hit by lightning in a parking lot while he was moving from one car to another. He was stepping into the second car with one foot on the ground and the other foot in the air. The ground was wet and he was wearing flip flops. The lightning and thunder occurred at the same time. Shortly after the strike, he had pain. For a while after the strike, he experienced anxiety about lightning when storms were in the area, but now, the anxiety is no longer present. Around the time the anxiety faded, he starting having episodes of pain, burning, stinging and numbness in the left quad area of his leg, around where the pants pocket is located. These episodes are most pronounced when he stands up for extended periods such as when showering or standing in line. He repositions his leg to get comfortable. Later, the right leg also had similar symptoms near the pants pocket, but not as intense as the left. Mr. Zwick described himself as being a "hairy man". Both spots on his legs began to shed hair and go bald and they continue to have pain. At the time of the strike, he had keys in one front pocket and might have had a cell phone in the other pocket, but he could not recall. He reports no weakness. Dr. Phil Yarnell thought the pain in the bald spots might be localized sensory neuropathy. Topical Lidocaine was suggested for the pain. Ken Langford speculated that there was induction from the car body, a 2006 Chevy Cobalt with one- and two-sided galvanized steel. *NOTE: Verbal permission was obtained from Mr. Zwick to use personal identifying information, per HIPAA regulations.*

4. In the April 2026 minutes, news of a lightning strike on a woman in Superior, Colorado was presented. Links to the news stories are presented below in the Lightning Links section. Since then, Ken Langford performed a site inspection of the location where she was hit and gave us his initial findings. Here are his notes within the quotation marks.

“On 4/20/26 Ken Langford made a site survey of the location of a lightning injury which occurred on April 9, 2026. Here are the details of the survey:

The incident occurred next to and east of a walking path that cuts between two neighborhoods in Superior, Colorado. The path is southeast of Superior Elementary School. The closest access approach to the location is either just south of 2044 Lasalle Street or just south of 2005 Keota Lane, where a crossing walking path may allow for easy access to the site which lies to the north of the perpendicular junction.

The closest mapped properties which back up to the location are 1029 Lasalle Street & 1915 Keota Lane.

I spoke with a homeowner at 1895 Keota Lane and to a passerby as I was checking the site.

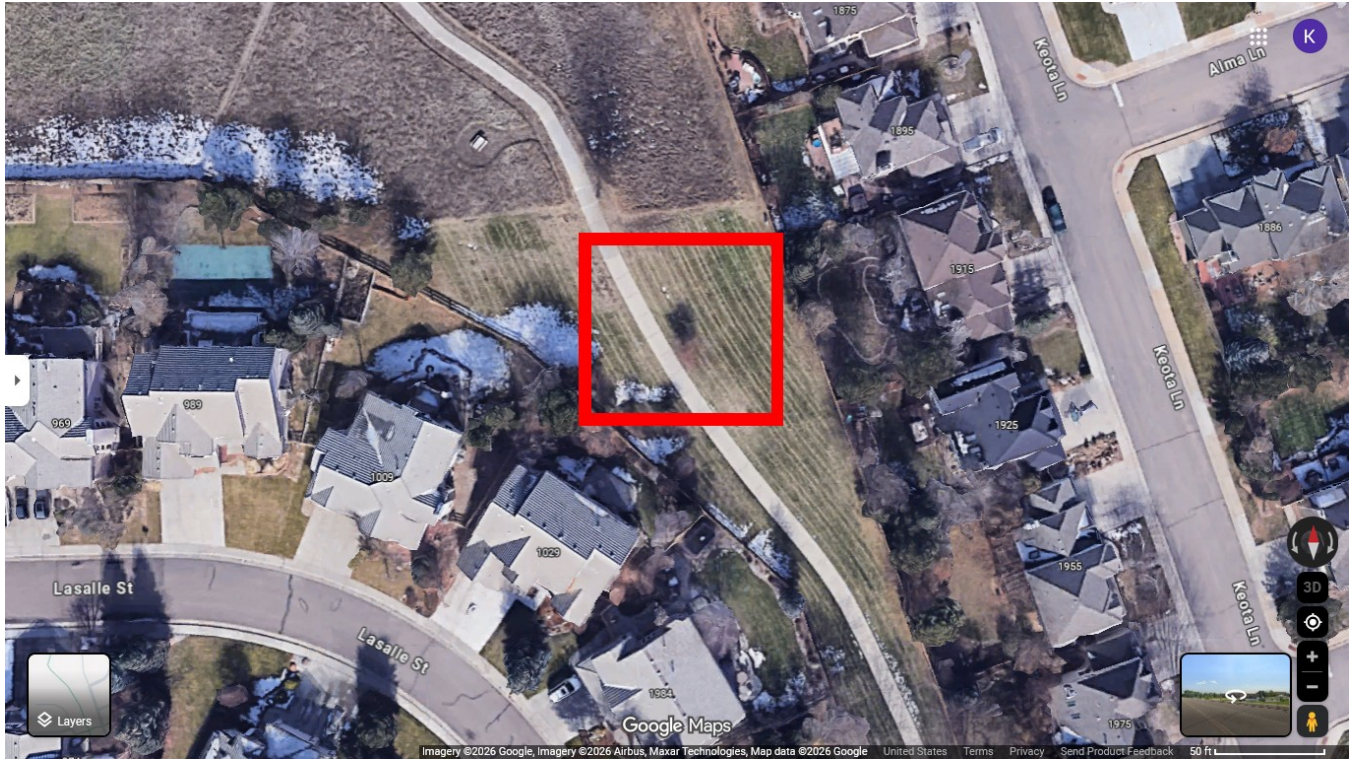
On the site itself there is a single cottonwood tree of maybe 40 feet in height, and next to it a wood and metal picnic table. The tree has obvious evidence of the strike, with a six to eight inch swath of bark having been blown and thrown from the tree. I paced off the distance to the largest piece of bark at 22 feet away, however in the 11 days since the strike the bark may well have been moved by people visiting the site. There is still one piece of bark hanging from the tree. The exposed trunk showed no evidence of burning, leading me to speculate that it was a short duration stroke.

The adjacent picnic style table is constructed of heavy metal bars which are bent in such a way that they support wooden bench boards and table top boards. The closest wood showed some evidence of discoloration on the facing edge of the tabletop, and some staining or darkening in two spots on the bench close to the tree. Again I speculate that these are somehow artifacts of the incident.

I neglected to bring my analog compass, but I did use a digital compass on my cell phone to see if I could detect any sign of the metal on the picnic table.

Woman at 1895 Keota Lane: She was home and did hear the thunder. It upset her dogs and by the time she got them calmed down the EMTs were already on scene. She thinks someone on Lasalle Street was first to call in the injury. She did not know whether the woman was seated at the picnic table before she was struck.”

Photos taken by Ken from the inspection are presented below.



Google Maps aerial view of the scene.



Debarked portion of tree.



Close up view of part of the debarked tree trunk.



Part of the bark from the tree lies in the bottom foreground. It is unknown if the bark was thrown there by the strike or if someone picked up and dropped it there.



Spots on the picnic table seat (lower right quadrant of image) which may be artifacts from the strike.

5. LDC welcomes your questions. Please send them via e-mail to Steve Clark at sclarktoto@gmail.com. Your medical questions will be forwarded to Dr. Phil Yarnell for his review and will usually be taken up for discussion in the next month's meeting. Please be advised any questions posed are for the general consideration by the group and any answers given do not constitute a formal medical opinion. If a formal evaluation is requested, arrangements can be made directly with Dr. Yarnell. If you have a medical emergency, please call 911 or your local EMS.
6. Questions, comments, error notifications, and critiques of these minutes are welcome. Please send them to Steve Clark. Please keep the communications professional and respectful. They will be forwarded to the appropriate author(s) of the minutes and addressed accordingly.

7. LDC Disclaimer: These minutes do not represent official positions of the LDC or its members. They simply reflect the comments made at the meeting. Furthermore, the LDC does not implicitly or explicitly recommend or endorse any product or service. Any product or service presented in these minutes is done so for purposes of discussion and analysis. The merit (or lack thereof) is open for the consideration and review by the entire membership.
8. Next meeting: Friday, July 10, 2026, from 11:45 AM to TBA. Meeting topic: TBA.

Respectfully Submitted,
Steven E. Clark
President, Lightning Data Center, Denver, CO

Lightning Links

This is a monthly listing of periodicals, websites, and videos about lightning and allied areas from a variety of sources. A headline or description is listed, followed by the link. Please note that some of the links are perishable, which means you'll need to go to the source for the information.

Oravetz, J. and W. Beese, 2026: Woman Struck by Lightning on Superior Walking Path Identified. *KUSA-TV*. April 10 and 11, 2026.

Link: <https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/woman-struck-lightning-superior-walking-path/73-86d5947a-efb6-48e7-8ac1-48bb6d185647?tbref=hp>

Finch, J., 2026: Doctor Treating Woman Struck by Lightning Explains Health Impacts of Strikes. *KUSA-TV*. April 15, 2026.

Link: <https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/doctor-explains-lightning-strike-impacts/73-17901d9a-88e6-4a8f-a22f-8d15320ce35a?tbref=hp>

Swanson, K., 2026: Boulder County Sheriff's Office Searching for Help To Identify Injured Woman Struck By Lightning. *CBS Colorado*. April 11, 2026.

Link: <https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/boulder-county-sheriffs-office-identify-woman-lightning-strike/>

Ortegon CEN, Cardona CDP, Londoño P, et al. Pulmonary Embolism Due to Lightning Impact: First Case Report. *Med Int Mex*. 2024;40(02):159-163.

Link: <https://www.medigraphic.com/cgi-bin/new/resumenI.cgi?IDARTICULO=115914>
