

## 6 Miles, Wait Awhile.

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Florida is known for its beautiful landscapes, making it a popular destination for film productions. However, its title as the 2022 Lightning Capital of the United States highlights a significant safety concern for those working in the film industry, especially when shooting on exterior locations during the summer. Lightning strikes pose serious hazards, including electrocution, burns, falling debris, concussion, and fire.

### The Magnitude of the Lightning Risk

In 2022, Four Corners, Florida, located near Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge, witnessed an astounding 1,229 lightning events per square mile, making it the highest density of

lightning in any community in the country. Additionally, the state of Florida secured the top spot in the United States for total lightning density, with a staggering 18,706,904 strikes throughout the year.

### **Understanding the Risks and Taking Precautions**

As the film industry involves working in ever-changing environments, it is crucial to recognize the potential dangers of lightning strikes while filming on exterior locations. The CSATF Safety Bulletin #38 provides guidelines for inclement or severe weather, including lightning.

#### **[Download a PDF of CSATF Safety Bulletin #38](#)**

The bulletin recommends forming an Action Plan that outlines communication methods, evacuation procedures, meeting areas, and equipment shutdown in the event of severe weather.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

While the 1st AD is often responsible for determining when to pause shooting due to weather conditions, Article 10, item (C)(2) of the Area Standards Agreement emphasizes the need for a safety contact. This contact should be identified in call sheets, along with the employer's safety hotline number.

### **Implementing the Action Plan**

**If lightning is detected within 6 miles of the shooting location, the Action Plan should be activated.** The crew should immediately seek shelter in a predetermined evacuation area. Moreover, if lightning strikes within 10 miles of the set, the routine procedure is to shut down any portable generator used for providing power to exterior locations. Additionally, all manned aerial lifts must be lowered to the ground and cease to operate. Unmanned lifts should be secured and all personnel are required to remain at a safe distance from the equipment. The Gaffer may participate in determining the proximity of lightning to the set, using lightning detectors or visual/auditory measurements.

### **The 30-30 Rule**

The National Weather Service underscores the importance of understanding that if you can hear thunder, it signifies that lightning is already within a 10-mile radius. For gauging the approximate distance of lightning strikes, the 30-30 Rule is a simple and effective method. Count the seconds between seeing a flash of lightning and hearing the rumble of thunder. Divide that number by 5 to determine the approximate distance in miles. If the lightning strike was within 6 miles of the location (30 seconds or less between lightning and thunder), the crew is in potential danger and should seek shelter. **Wait for 30 minutes from the last flash or thunder to establish an "all clear."**

## Seeking Shelter and Safety Precautions

When seeking shelter during a lightning storm, a pre-determined evacuation area is recommended. If such an area is not identified, take shelter inside a sturdy building or a hard-top vehicle with rolled-up windows. Avoid convertibles and tall objects like towers, aerial lifts, camera booms, and metal equipment. If stuck in an isolated location without buildings or vehicles, avoid high ground and stay away from isolated trees. Refrain from contact with bodies of water and using electrical equipment until the storm subsides.

## Lightning Strikes on Co-workers

In the unfortunate event of a co-worker being struck by lightning, remember that lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to touch. However, they require urgent medical attention. Call 911 immediately and perform CPR if the person is unresponsive or not breathing. If available, use an Automatic External Defibrillator.

## Conclusion

Working in the film industry in Florida provides unique challenges due to the state's high lightning density. By understanding the risks, implementing an Action Plan, and following safety guidelines like the 30-30 Rule, film crews can protect themselves from potential lightning-related hazards and ensure a safer work environment. Remember to prioritize safety and stay informed about weather conditions while filming on exterior locations in the Sunshine State.

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For further reading and in-depth information on lightning safety while working in the film industry in Florida, you can refer to the following sources:

**1. OSHA Lightning Fact**

**Sheet:** <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3863.pdf>

**2. Lightning Safety on the Job:** <https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-job>

**3. Lightning Strike Victim Data:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/lightning/victimdata.html>

**4. 5 Striking Facts Versus Myths About Lightning You Should Know:**

<https://www.noaa.gov/stories/5-striking-facts-versus-myths-about-lightning-you-should-know>

**5. Lightning Safety:** <https://www.noaa.gov/jetstream/lightning/lightning-safety>

**6. Lightning Safety Tips and Resources:** <https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning>

These resources provide valuable insights, statistics, and practical tips to enhance lightning safety awareness and preparedness while working in the film industry in Florida. Stay informed and prioritize safety to mitigate the risks associated with lightning strikes during film productions.



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