

# Will Lightning Death Count for U.S. Remain Unconfirmed?

CUMBERLAND, Maine, Dec. 17, 2020 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – Is there a connection between the number of lightning death reports and the COVID-19 pandemic? The [National Lightning Safety Council \(NLSC\)](#) is trying to find out. Amidst uncertainty surrounding the accurate (actual recorded) number of strike deaths in the U.S., members of the NLSC are wondering if the pandemic could be a factor in the reporting of lightning deaths in 2020.



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"Our primary source for information on lightning deaths is from broadcast and print media reports," said John Jensenius, lightning specialist and founding member of the National Lightning Safety Council. "With this year's media coverage primarily focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, the election, social injustice and unrest, and the devastating wildfires in the western United States, lightning deaths and injuries did not get their usual news coverage."

Jane Elizabeth, a media consultant who has worked as an editor in several U.S. newsrooms including The Raleigh News & Observer and The Durham Herald-Sun, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the Washington Post and others, agrees with Jensenius and notes that, "Information on lightning incidents may never have

reached journalists. Public information officers and public officials who normally would notify local media about such incidents also may have been overwhelmed by the urgent events of 2020.”

Elizabeth points out that according to the [Poynter Institute](#), the pandemic has forced the closing of more than 60 newsrooms this year. And, per the [New York Times](#), the pandemic and new ownership of news outlets has also led to layoffs, furloughs or pay cuts of roughly 37,000 media employees.

“Thus far in 2020, media reports have documented only 12 U.S. lightning deaths, but we’ve learned through other sources of five more,” explained Jensenius. “We discovered two of those additional deaths recently from the Florida Department of Health vital statistics online database. It’s worth noting that Florida is one of the few states that provide up-to-date death information online, so there are likely unreported lightning deaths in other states that we simply don’t know about.”

For decades, Jensenius has felt confident about the accuracy of statistical tracking and graphic chart notices for lightning safety awareness he posts online each year. Just as COVID-19 has dealt challenging wildcards to healthcare, science, industry and infrastructure, the NLSC’s investigations to confirm lightning strike death counts have faced formidable roadblocks in 2020.

“Florida is the only state that I’ve been able to delve into, so it’s a bit disconcerting to find this many lightning deaths that never made an online news report,” said Jensenius. “As with many aspects of 2020, I’m not sure we’ll have an accurate picture of lightning’s impact anytime soon.”

The NLSC invites educators, government officials and risk management experts to help build lightning safe communities by learning more about lightning safety and risk reduction. Visit the National Lightning Safety Council [website](#) for shareable information, resources and safety tips.

Inquiries about specific lightning concerns can also be addressed to Council members; find website contacts [here](#):  
<http://lightningsafetycouncil.org/LSC-About.html>

Learn more at <http://lightningsafetycouncil.org/LSC-Resources.html>