

## IN MEMORY OF RICK MORAN

### LIGHTNING AWARENESS FOR MOTORCYCLISTS

Rick was just 43 when his life was cut short; he was struck and killed by an isolated bolt of lightning May 24<sup>th</sup> 2005 while riding his motorcycle. Rick was wearing full riding gear (full face helmet, riding pants, boots, and gloves); his gear did not keep him from getting struck by lightning. We want to take this opportunity to raise awareness of the dangers of lightning.

Lightning is one of the most underrated severe weather hazards, more deadly than hurricanes or tornadoes. In the United States lightning strikes kill an average of 67 people yearly. Unfortunately, many more people are struck but survive with a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms, including memory loss, attention deficits, sleep disorders, numbness, dizziness, stiffness in joints, irritability, fatigue, weakness, muscle spasms, depression, and an inability to sit for long periods at a time.

The number of fatalities involving motorcyclists hit by lightning is a high percentage compared to the average lightning fatality rate. As recently as August the following lightning strikes involving motorcyclists were reported. August 7th 2005 a group of motorcyclists, taking shelter in the woods from a thunderstorm, were all struck by lightning, one was killed, the others hospitalized. A few days later on August 10th 2005 a motorcyclist returning home from Sturgis was struck by lightning while riding through a thunderstorm and lived to tell about it. On August 11th 2005 another motorcyclist had a close call with lightning while riding through a thunderstorm.

There are times when a lightning flash can travel horizontally many miles away from the thunderstorm cloud itself and then strike the ground. These types of lightning flashes are called "[Bolts from the Blue](#)" because they seem to come out of a clear blue sky. These flashes have been known to cause fatalities. At least 10% of lightning strikes are where there is no rain or when there is some blue in the sky. Lightning bolts can easily extend 6 miles in front of or behind a storm and it is not uncommon for a bolt to extend even 10 to 12 miles away from a storm.

Lightning is not attracted to anything, but it 'tends' to strike tall or isolated pointy objects. A motorcycle on a road is a tall pointy object. Taking shelter under a tree is the worst thing you can do. If you are among a group of motorcyclists caught in a thunderstorm, go to a "safer" place such as under an overpass or inside a building. Be sure to get off your bikes and spread out, so if one is hit the others can do CPR. If lightning is in the immediate area, and there is no safe location nearby, get into the lightning desperation position. Crouch down but do NOT lie down. Squat down while keeping your feet together. A motorcyclist is NOT safe on an open road during a thunderstorm; the rubber tires of a motorcycle DO NOT protect you.

For further information, please visit the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website at: [www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov) and the Struck By Lightning.Org website at [www.struckbylightning.org](http://www.struckbylightning.org)