



Lightning

by VINCENT T. PICA, II

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If you have been boating more than 5 minutes, it is quite possible that you have left the dock under fair skies and come back being chased by the Wrath of God... This column is about that.

Facts and Myths About Lightning

The only natural disaster that kills more Americans than lightning is floods. That's right. Hurricanes, mudslides, forest fires and tornadoes all come in behind lightning. And what is amazing to me is that you can go to a NASA website, particularly given the intro above, (NASA-Lightning), and find that lightning avoids the ocean. This proves once again that there are lies, damn lies and statistics. Lightning may not hit the ocean often - the vast, almost limitless ocean that covers three-quarters of the surface of the planet - but it sure likes near-coastal environments... That's where we are...!

We've all grown up counting to 5 or 6 between thunder claps to determine how far away the storm is and whether it is getting closer or not. Lightning, which can hit as far away as 20 miles from its source-thunder-cloud, is so dangerous that it just makes no sense to try to outwit it. That being the case, are there any preventative tools? Well, now that you ask, there is something called a Lightning Detector. They have been used by the military and aircraft operators for years. Now, for \$200-\$500, you can get a portable one for the boat.

"I need a lightning detector? I can see it!" Not if it is 20 miles away and you need to know if it is between you and home...

Unlike metal boats, fiberglass or wood boats, unfortunately, don't conduct electricity well so "side flash" occurs, which makes the electric charge jump around looking for good conductors. Take a look in

the mirror. We are good conductors.

What to Do...

Well, not getting hit in the first place is the best advice. If the weather forecast is bad, forget about trying to get out there to take advantage of the predators starting to "feed up" (they can sense the lowering pressure via their lateral lines) before the storm. It isn't worth it.

But, if you are out there, what do you do when you see a storm approaching? NOAA says:

- Get out of the water if you are swimming off the transom. It's a great conductor of electricity.

- If caught in a boat, crouch down in the center away from metal hardware.

- Don't stand in puddles of water. (Ya' think?)

Let me add a couple of thoughts.

1. Life jackets on everyone.

2. Disconnect all electronics that aren't essential to getting home. Electrical tape over the exposed leads so nothing climbs up the wire to the gear...

3. If you can see the edges of the storm, and the center of the storm is between you and home, run at speed at a 90-degree angle to the storm and try to go around it. Squalls can be as deadly as a major blow but they are smallish and can be avoided. If the storm covers the sky from horizon to horizon, say a prayer* (I carry one on the outside of my sea journal) and head in at speed. (See SSP article, "Skippering in Heavy Seas", July 15, 2010)

4. Get on the radio and let someone know where you are, where you are headed and at what speed you can make. Check in every 15 minutes. After 30 minutes of not checking in, someone needs to start the "rescue starts now" clock...

5. It would be great to have individuals aboard

who are competent in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid. Many individuals struck by lightning or exposed to excessive electrical current can be saved with prompt and proper artificial respiration and/or CPR. There is no danger in touching persons after they have been struck by lightning. No joke. Some people fear that. No one has CPR training? Call the American Red Cross and get a course under your keel.

If a boat has been, or is suspected of having been, struck by lightning (overnight on a mooring?), check out the electrical system and the compasses to insure that no damage has occurred. A number of years ago, I dinghy'd out to my son's 17' Seahunt, sitting on her mooring east of Gunning Point. As I approached, I noticed that the bow-mounted navy lights were broken. "Son of a gun, some yahoo hit the boat last night. Must have been drunk as a skunk!" Then I noticed some of the other electronics had scorch marks and cracked glass covers. The light went on! I realized that this must be a left-over from a storm that had come through the night before. Scratching my head, I lifted the cover to check the fuel tank. Looking down, I saw that the sender wire that runs from the cockpit gauge back to the fuel tank was completely scorched - to within 1" of the fuel tank itself... We re-wired the boat and repeated our prayer.

Dear God, Thy sea is so great and my boat is so small. Protect me...

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at DSO-HR and we will help you "get in this thing..."



County Clerk Update

by SUFFOLK COUNTY CLERK

JUDY PASCALE

BECOMING A NOTARY PUBLIC IN SUFFOLK COUNTY

Suffolk County Clerk Judith Pascale is encouraging anyone who has considered becoming a Notary Public to visit www.SuffolkCountyNY.gov/clerk to learn more about the process.

A Notary Public is a state-appointed official who administers oaths and serves as an impartial witness when important documents are signed. A Notary Public most commonly administers oaths and affirmations but can also certify acknowledgements on documents such as deeds, mortgages or powers of attorneys. A Notary Public is commissioned to serve for four years.

"If you are eighteen years old, a citizen of the United States and either live or have an office in New York State, you are eligible to serve as a Notary Public," stated Suffolk County Clerk Judith A. Pascale. "Because you will need to pass an examination in order to serve, you should visit our office so that we can provide you with a copy of the Notary Public License Law study guide," continued Pascale.

The Notary Public Exam is a walk-in exam given regularly throughout New York State. In Suffolk County, the exam is administered by New York State Department of State in Hauppauge at the New York State Office Building located on Veteran's Highway. An appointment is not necessary; examinations are conducted on a "walk-in" basis.

The fee to take the exam is \$15.00, due on the date of the exam, payable by check or money order to the "Department of State". Cash is not accepted.

The Office of the Suffolk County Clerk maintains records of all notaries public commissioned in Suffolk County and provides authentications of Notary Public signatures. In addition, Notary Public renewals are administered by our notary department. The public can visit the notary department located at 310 Center Drive in Riverhead between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays.



Legislative Update

By Suffolk County Legislator

ED ROMAINE (1st District)

Through resolutions I sponsored the Suffolk County Legislature, last week, named five of the six members to the newly constituted LIPA Oversight Committee.

The five members appointed on Tuesday include two experts in the operations of electric utility companies, Peter Schlusser and Matthew Cordaro; two energy experts, Irving Like and Sheldon Sackstein; and civic leader, Fred Gorman. The sixth and final member, a person with familiarity in operations of LIPA, will be named by the presiding officer separately.

Established late last year pursuant to Local Law No. 36-1999, the Long Island Power Authority Legislative Oversight Committee will look at LIPA's rates - specifically its standard rates, variable rates, and peak/off-peak rates - contracts, practices, and disaster and storm response policies to determine if the agency is working in the best interests of the Suffolk County ratepayers.

Most Suffolk ratepayers are in the dark regarding the operation of LIPA and the historic lack of transparency and disclosure by LIPA is troubling. I am confident these five individuals have the experience and knowledge necessary to shed some light on its operations.

Camp Pa-qua-tuck in Center Moriches, is once again offering its weekend respite program, for campers with physical and developmental disabilities. Children up to the age of 21 can arrive on Friday evening and leave on Sunday afternoon. The weekend respite program runs until June. Up to fourteen campers will be admitted for each weekend. During those weekends, the camp will be staffed by five counselors and camp nurse.

During the weekend, children can participate in various activities during their stay, including baking, arts and crafts, games and watching movies. The program also benefits the parents by giving them a break from the very demanding responsibilities of being their child's caregiver. 2011 dates are as follows:

February 18-20	February 25-27	March 11-13	March 25-27
March 25-27	May 20-22	June 10-12	