



## Struck By Lightning? Nah! Yes, Sailor...

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With the fantastic storms we've been having lately, I thought it useful that we update the column on lightning and boating. Clearly, it is quite possible and has been quite likely that you can leave 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, (NOAA-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 opera-

tors for years. Now, for \$200-\$500, you can get a portable one for the boat.



Courtesy: Wikipedia

"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 are, 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 small-ish 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 30, 2008)

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 nav 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...

This year was different. The lightning missed my boat. Hit the house... Luckily, just some chipped paint but I'm starting to wonder about Gunning Point! What's under there - Atlantis?

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at [JoinUSCGAux2010@aol.com](mailto:JoinUSCGAux2010@aol.com) or go direct to John Blevins, who is in charge of new members matters, at [FSO-PS@emcg.us](mailto:FSO-PS@emcg.us) and we will help you "get in this thing..."

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



## FISHING WITH TONY

### FLUKE OFF TO MIX START FOR BOATS WITH RSA PERMITS

by TONY SALERNO

The real indication that summer is just around the corner came this past weekend as balmy temperatures and loads of sunshine brought out fishermen in droves. Depending upon where you were fishing, you either had a slow pick on fluke or an easy limit. Yes you read right, I said fluke. You are correct; fluke season does not open until May 15 with a two fish of 21 1/2 inches or larger limit per person per day. However what you may not have realized is that any open fishing boats sailing around Long Island with an RSA (Research-Set Aside) Permit can fish for the summer flatties with a four fish creel between 17 and 20 inches per day. These regulations took hold this past Saturday, May 1st and are intact until the May 15th season debut.

Keep in mind that this only goes for open boats that are carrying this special permit. What this means is if you fish on an open boat with an RSA Permit, you are permitted 4 fluke in the slot range of 17 and 20 inches. Yes, you read right, which means if you happen to catch that dream fluke of double digits or even a 4-pounder, back in it goes until May 15th when you are more than welcome to come back to the same spot if you like and try to catch it again. Although this may sound a bit bleak, it will mean more fillets for the dinner table.

The Research Set-Aside (RSA) program is utilized to encourage cooperative research between commercial fishing vessels and scientific researchers to further the understanding of our nation's fisheries. Different fishery management plans implement this program differently. Most fisheries, like summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, tilefish, spiny dogfish, squid, butterfish, Atlantic mackerel, and bluefish, set aside portions of the annual fishery-wide quota to research. Other fisheries, like Atlantic sea scallop and monkfish, set aside days-at-sea from the annual pool of days for research. Researchers and commercial fishing vessels participating in RSA activities often require special exempted fishing permits (EFPs) or other authorizations for scientific research.

As for the fluking, the Shinnecock Star out in Hampton Bays has the flatties locked in with plenty of keepers being converted to tasty fillets on a daily basis. Meanwhile Captain Desmond O'Sullivan of the Port Jeff based open boat the Celtic Quest is finding water temps a bit too cool as the fluke are on the shoals, but a bit difficult to get them going good. However, with plenty of warm days predicted for the days ahead, expect the fishing to explode any day now.

## DEC Announces New Changes to Fluke, Scup and Black Sea Bass Seasons

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Pete Grannis announced the 2010 recreational fishing seasons and catch limits for fluke, scup and black sea bass:

- Black Sea Bass: For 2010, DEC has set the season for May 22 to Sept. 12, a reduction from 2009 when the season was open the entire year. The change is necessary to comply with interstate and federal management measures to assist in rebuilding the black sea bass population. The minimum size limit remains at 12.5 inches and the possession limit remains 25 fish per day.

- Scup: The regular recreational season is the same as last year - May 24 through Sept. 26. The size limit is 10.5 inches and the possession limit is 10 fish per day.

There is a new season for scup for recreational anglers aboard licensed party or charter vessels; it will run from June 8 to Sept. 6, with a minimum size limit of 11 inches and a possession limit of 10 fish per day. The scup "bonus" season for recreational anglers aboard licensed party or charter vessels will be from Sept. 7 through Oct. 11, with a size limit of 11 inches and a new daily possession limit of 40 fish.

- Fluke: Commissioner Grannis previously announced proposed limits for fluke, also known as summer flounder, (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/press/63240.html>), which have now been finalized. The 2010 fluke season is a return to a longer, more traditional recreational fishing season. The recreational season for fluke will open May 15 and close Sept. 6. The minimum size limit remains at 21 inches and the possession limit remains at two fish per day.

As a member state of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC), New York is required to develop recreational fishing limits that will prevent New York State anglers from exceeding the state's assigned fluke quota. DEC convened meetings with the Marine Resources Advisory Council - made up of representatives of the recreational fishing community -- to develop options that encompass the most popular fluke fishing periods on both the north and south shores of Long Island. Commissioner Grannis said the 2010 schedule would maintain a viable fluke fishery for all anglers, while ensuring that New York meets the federal requirements.

Last year, New York did not exceed its fluke quota for the first time in six years. That fact, combined with a federal decision to increase the overall East Coast fluke quota, means that New York anglers will enjoy a significantly higher quota for 2010: 449,000 fluke, an increase of 23 percent over 2009.