



WHO ? KNEW

13 Things You Didn't Know About Thunderstorms

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

1 Lightning strikes more than eight million times a day worldwide. That's about 93 times per second.

2 How hot is a lightning bolt? About 50,000°F—five times hotter than the surface of the sun.

3 Yes, it really can rain frogs, fish, and other decidedly odd things. It's a rare meteorological event, but scientists say strong winds from a tornado or from a storm can be powerful enough to propel animals and objects high into the air, and they have to come down eventually. A small Australian town reported hundreds of fish falling from the sky in 2010.

4 Is it a hurricane or a typhoon? They're actually the same type of event. What we call a hurricane in the United States is a typhoon if it forms in the northwestern Pacific. Meteorologists also use the general term *tropical cyclone*.

5 It is a bad idea to take a shower during a thunderstorm. If lightning hits your house, it can travel through your plumbing and shock anyone who comes into contact with water flowing through it. People have been shocked or killed while bathing, washing dishes, and doing laundry. (This is also why indoor pools often close during storms.)



6 Rubber tires are not what protect you from lightning when you're in your car. You're protected because when lightning hits a car, it travels around the outside of the metal structure to get to the ground. Just be careful not to touch any metal areas on the interior.

7 By one measure, Tropical Storm Claudette was the wettest storm in U.S. history. It dumped 43 inches of rain in 24 hours—the most rain ever recorded in one day—on Alvin, Texas, in July 1979.

8 You can be struck by lightning even when it's not raining. About 10 percent of lightning strikes take place when there's no precipitation.

9 In the 1980s, NASA flew one airplane through 1,496 thunderstorms. It was struck by lightning more than 700 times. This was part of an effort to improve lightning-protection standards in aviation, and it worked. Today, a commercial airplane will be hit by lightning about once a year on average, typically with no ill effects. It has been