

STEALING THOR'S THUNDER LIGHTNING: MYTH VS. REALITY

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ABSTRACT

Thunder strikes terror in the hearts of man and has since the advent of time. We all fear the unknown; even the Greeks created a god, THOR, to be responsible for the thunder and rain. Thunder, by itself, can't hurt anyone; it is simply hot air moving very fast. Thunder, however, is caused by lightning and lightning is what we need to fear and rightfully so. Annually, lightning kills hundreds of Americans, injures another 2,000, damages or destroys approximately 30,000 structures, 1 starts thousands of forest fires and strikes mine properties over 100,000 times.

Although blasters usually fear the lightning hazard, some will push their luck as lightning begins to flash about. They ignore the hazard simply because they don't understand what lightning really is and the true threat that it really possesses.

Although the U. S. Bureau of Mines and Mine Safety and Health Administration have produced several fine studies dealing with lightning hazards for blasting operations as well as a collection of case histories, there still seems to be a general lack of understanding of the potential hazards at the user level.

The purpose of this paper is to provide the blaster with:

1. some basic facts regarding lightning, and
2. a common sense approach to deal with the potential hazards.