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SAFETY ALERT – LIGHTNING

30-60 people are injured by lightning each year in Britain with an average of three fatalities. People who are outdoors are most at risk, so the following alert has been compiled to help you minimise this risk.

There are various ways lightning can injure you; directly, by jumping from another object like a tree, as a ground current when it hits close to you or as a conductive hit where you are in contact with metal that has been hit. Whilst metal does not 'attract' lightning, it is clearly highly conductive and will allow current to travel long distances, including into buildings via pipes, aerials or wires.

Things that make you particularly vulnerable are being in wide open spaces, being the highest thing around or being in contact with a highly conductive item (like a fence, railing or cabled tool) close to a strike.

THE 30/30 RULE can help you to assess when the risk is highest, (most casualties happen either side of the peak of the storm). If the flash to bang time is 30 seconds, or less, the risk of a strike is highest and you should cease work, find a safe place and stay there until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO

- If lightning is forecast, ensure your teams know what to do and let the customer know you may have to pause the installation for safety reasons.
- Use the 30/30 rule to assess when to stop work, turn off electrical tools and take shelter. If your hair stands on end or appliances begin buzzing; drop to a crouched or kneeling position immediately.
- It is safe to shelter in your van or car - lightning will spread over the metal of the vehicle and earth through the tyres. Do not shelter beneath tall or isolated trees.
- If you have nowhere to shelter, crouch down with your feet together, hands on knees and your head tucked in.
- Lightning can be conducted, in a building, by aerials, piping or other wires. Except in cases of emergency, don't use your telephone (landline or mobile) until the storm is over.
- If someone is hit; dial 999, they need urgent help. Strikes are rarely instantly fatal but may stop the casualty's heart and/or breathing; start CPR if this is the case - you will not receive a shock from contact with the casualty at this point. All lightning strike casualties should be checked by a hospital even if the damage appears minimal as internal damage is not always immediately apparent.

TAKE CARE – LIGHTNING CAN BE DEADLY BUT IS EASILY AVOIDED

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