

National Lightning Safety Council Recalls Death of Marathon Runner to Highlight Lightning Safety for Outdoor Events

In Support of National Lightning Safety Awareness Week, June 18-24

CUMBERLAND, MAINE, UNITED STATES , June 17, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On September 28, 2019, ultra-runner [Thomas Stanley](#) was struck and killed by lightning as he approached the finish line of a 50-kilometer (31-mile) race. The [National Lightning Safety Council](#) (NLSC) is calling attention to this unfortunate incident to highlight the potential danger posed by the thousands of races held annually across the U.S. during the summer. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people participate in race events across the country. Unfortunately, lightning can present a deadly hazard when thunderstorms threaten.



Every year, hundreds of thousands of people participate in race events across the U.S. Unfortunately, lightning can present a deadly hazard to participants when thunderstorms threaten.

“While no one likes to see an event canceled or postponed, especially if they put in months of training, it is sometimes necessary for the safety of those participating, volunteering, or spectating,” said John Jensenius, a lightning safety specialist with the NLSC. “It’s important for the organizers of these events to have a lightning safety plan in place to protect all those involved. You don’t want to have people lining up at the starting line or along the route if thunderstorms are possible during the race.”

The NLSC is also raising concerns about races after decisions made at last month’s [Flying Pig Marathon](#) put the lives of about 10,000 runners at risk. Despite forecasts of thunderstorms days in advance, officials postponed their decision on whether to hold the event until the morning of the race. With thousands of runners at the starting line and despite a line of thunderstorms bearing down on the race course, the decision was made to start the race.

“Although no one was hurt during the 2023 Flying Pig Marathon, this is not a lightning safety success story,” said Chris Vagasky, a lightning safety specialist with the National Lightning Safety Council. “Distance races can last for hours with few lightning-safe locations available, so we encourage race directors to have proactive safety plans.”

The NLSC recommends that race plans specifically address the lightning threat and outline action measures to keep participants safe. The plans should include deadlines for making critical decisions. For large events, decisions to delay, cancel, or postpone activities may need to be made a day in advance. Waiting until the last minute to make a safety decision is often not a responsible option. Race safety plans should also include how decisions will be communicated. Finally, it’s important for everyone to know and understand the lightning plan in advance in the event it becomes necessary to delay, postpone or cancel the race.

The National Lightning Safety Council invites government officials, educators, and others to help build lightning safe communities by learning more about lightning safety, lightning protection and risk reduction. Visit <http://www.lightningsafetycouncil.com/> for shareable information, resources and safety tips for runners and outdoor sports events.

Inquiries about specific lightning concerns can also be addressed to Council members via contact information available on the National Lightning Safety Council website.

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