



## Fire Department

### Chief Chip Munna 457-4310

As many of you may have heard, our department was dispatched on Sunday, August 14, to a call on South Beach near Coquina Trail in reference to 2 boys that were struck by lightning. The parents of the boys authorized me to tell others about what happened. Here goes...

The 911 center advised that one child was in cardiac arrest. While en route to that call, another call came out for a fire alarm activation on Isle of Skye Crescent, which took several of our volunteer resources. The boys were 9 and 11 years old. The 9 y/o, Scott, was in cardiac arrest and CPR was started by the child's mother and a bystander. Two other bystanders were on the beach with three small children and were close enough to the boys to feel the effects of the lightning. They picked up the 11 y/o boy, Christopher, who was unconscious after the strike, and carried him to a nearby house. Scott was having good CPR performed when EMS arrived. The child was in a heart dysrhythmia, which is also called ventricular fibrillation. This occurs when the heart starts quivering and is not actually pumping any blood. Scott was also not breathing fast enough or keep enough to sustain life on his own.

Thanks to the outstanding efforts of the mother, other beach goers that acted quickly to help save someone else's life and the medical personnel, Scott regained a pulse after being defibrillated (shocked) by the paramedics. Other medical interventions were also performed while awaiting AirLink, the medical helicopter from Wilmington. The helicopter was delayed due to the inclement weather. When Scott was placed in the helicopter he had a strong pulse and other positive signs of hope. He was airlifted to New Hanover Regional Medical Center and then transferred to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit in Chapel Hill. Scott has recently had his breathing tube removed and is talking with his parents like a normal healthy 9 y/o boy. Christopher, the 11 y/o, was transported from the island by ambulance to Doshier and then transferred to Chapel Hill later that evening. He was eventually released from the hospital with burns and injuries related to the strike. He too is functioning normally

and is doing great. Nine individuals in all were in close proximity of the lightning strike, but only the two boys received direct current from the strike. The other seven were assessed later in the afternoon due to continued tingling and associated symptoms from being within the gradient of the strike. None of the seven were sent to the hospital. There are so many that deserve recognition. Some names I cannot give out until I get permission, but others include Brooks Powell for his assistance in using his private boat and car to transport family members to the hospital. The Monroe family in Killegray Ridge for taking care of the victims' other young cousins while their parents went to the hospitals to be with their injured sons. Another couple that was on the beach also offered assistance. A 20 y/o girl who witnessed the event and yelled for her mom; her mom being the beachgoer that started CPR with Scott's mom. The three medical personnel on vacation that assisted in CPR. The two women with their three small children that carried young Christopher to a nearby house. And of course all the medical and fire personnel, helicopter staff, and hospital staff that worked so vigorously on both of the young boys.

I have been in emergency medicine since 1991. Events like these simply remind us of our frailty and what a privilege life really is. At any moment an unexpected event can occur and change any of us and our friends and family forever. If it was not for the selfless actions of others rushing to the aid of these two boys and performing good CPR while 911 was being activated, and the tremendous efforts of your Fire-Rescue personnel, both paid and volunteer, the outcome could be very different and very grim. If everyone performed selfless acts, even just once a month, then the world would be a much better place.

Again, thanks again to all the beachgoers that aided in saving the lives of young Scott and Christopher. Their parents extend their utmost gratitude; gratitude and thanks that words cannot even begin to fully express. God bless all, especially the children.