

Two boys injured in Bald Head lightning strike

By [Ken Little](#)

Staff Writer

A lightning strike just before noon Sunday injured two boys playing in the surf at Bald Head Island, authorities said.

One of the boys, a 9-year-old, was airlifted to New Hanover Regional Medical Center and then flown to UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill. The boy's 11-year-old cousin suffered less serious injuries and was taken to Doshier Memorial Hospital in Southport.

Intense lightning in Brunswick County resulted in strikes on at least six homes in Ocean Isle Beach and Oak Island. Several homes were damaged but no fires resulted, authorities said.

The names of the two boys were not released and their conditions were not available Sunday night. Both are from Virginia and were staying on the island with their families, Bald Head Island Fire/EMS Chief Chip Munna said. Chief Munna and fellow paramedic Rick Sousa were able to revive the 9-year-old victim, who was in cardiac arrest when they arrived on scene.

"They were in the water and the lightning struck the surf," Chief Munna said. "Fortunately, we were able to get a pulse back. Luckily, the family started CPR quickly and someone called 911 quickly." A man and woman were sitting nearby on the beach when the lightning bolt hit.

"All the other couple remembers is the crack. There was the sound and the pressure and they saw someone laying on the beach in the surf," Chief Munna said.

The couple, whose names were not available, were dazed but unhurt.

The storm that spawned the lightning blew up quickly.

"Typically, you have a warning about storms and you stay away from the beach and the water," Chief Munna said. "It really came out of nowhere. There was a lot of lightning strikes on Ocean Isle Beach."

Capt. Chuck Rash of the Ocean Isle Beach Fire Department said four homes were struck by lightning between 11:20 a.m. and 12:20 p.m. on the island's east end

"The electrical system was severely damaged on one of the homes," he said. "It pretty much blew the siding off and scorched the side."

The storm rapidly overtook Ocean Isle Beach, Capt. Rash said.

"It got really dark quick and then it opened up. It was some of the sharpest lightning I've ever seen," he said.

At least two homes in Oak Island were struck by lightning about the same time, authorities said.

Lightning did not spare New Hanover County. Two transformers in the area of Blue Clay Road and Castle Hayne Road were zapped by lightning strikes, knocking out telephone service to the New Hanover County jail for most of the afternoon.

About 400 utility customers in the Blue Clay Road area lost power. Electricity was restored by 5 p.m. to most customers, Progress Energy spokesman John Sharo said.

Lightning has been the second-largest storm killer in the U.S. for the last 40 years, exceeded only by floods. The U.S. averages 76 reported lightning fatalities a year, with about 25 more believed to go unreported, according to the National Weather Service. Only about 10 percent of people who are struck by lightning are killed, leaving 90 percent with various degrees of disability.

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