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Thunderstorms



What Is a Thunderstorm?

A **thunderstorm** is a storm with lightning, thunder, heavy rain and/or hail.

What causes thunderstorms?

When air is warm and has a lot of water vapor it begins to rise and cool forming a cloud with great peaks, called a cumulonimbus cloud. Thunderstorms happen when cold air, called a cold front, comes in and pushes or forces warm air to rise. Clouds keep growing and growing as more water vapor condenses, getting heavier and heavier until the clouds can't hold any more water. The water then falls heavily as rain or hail, causing the effects you see during a thunderstorm. Inside the cloud, a storm is raging and it becomes very dangerous for airplanes to pass through it.



What is thunder?

Ecobottle Sample



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Thunderstorm – A storm with lightning, thunder, heavy rain or hail.

Expand – Get bigger.

Contract – Get smaller.

What is lightning?

Lightning is caused by thunderstorms and is a bright flash of electricity. It happens when ice and water **particles** bump into each other in the thundercloud and create an electrical charge. When the charges are



big enough, they jump from one place to another. This jump can happen within the cloud, between two or more clouds and between the cloud and the ground.

Did you know?

Roy Sullivan was a park ranger in Virginia between 1942 and 1977. During this time, he was struck by lightning 7 times and survived them all!

How do electrical charges form?

Ecobottle Sample



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The taller the object, the better it is at **conducting** electricity. This is why tall objects like trees and buildings are hit by lightning more often. Also, metal objects conduct electricity well so if you are standing outside during a thunderstorm while holding a golf club over your head, you are more likely to be hit by lightning!

A cool tip!

You can tell how far away a storm is by calculating a few numbers!

- 1) Start counting right after you hear the thunder until you see the lightning
- 2) Divide that number by 5.
- 3) This tells you how many miles away the storm is.

Example: If you counted 10 seconds between the thunder and lightning. 10 divided by 5 equals 2. The storm is two miles away.

Particle – Small pieces of stuff like water drops, dust, etc.

Conducting – Moving electric charges from one place to another.

Reading Comprehension Questions:

1. What is a
2. How does a thunderstorm happen?
3. What is
4. What is lightning and how does it form? Explain in your own words.
5. How do
6. Can you
7. If you see lightning and then hear thunder 15 seconds later, how far away is the storm?

Extension Questions

8. Create a Thunderstorm safety tip sheet that could be put up in your class. Ask your teacher how your poster is to be created.

Ecobottle Sample



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References

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