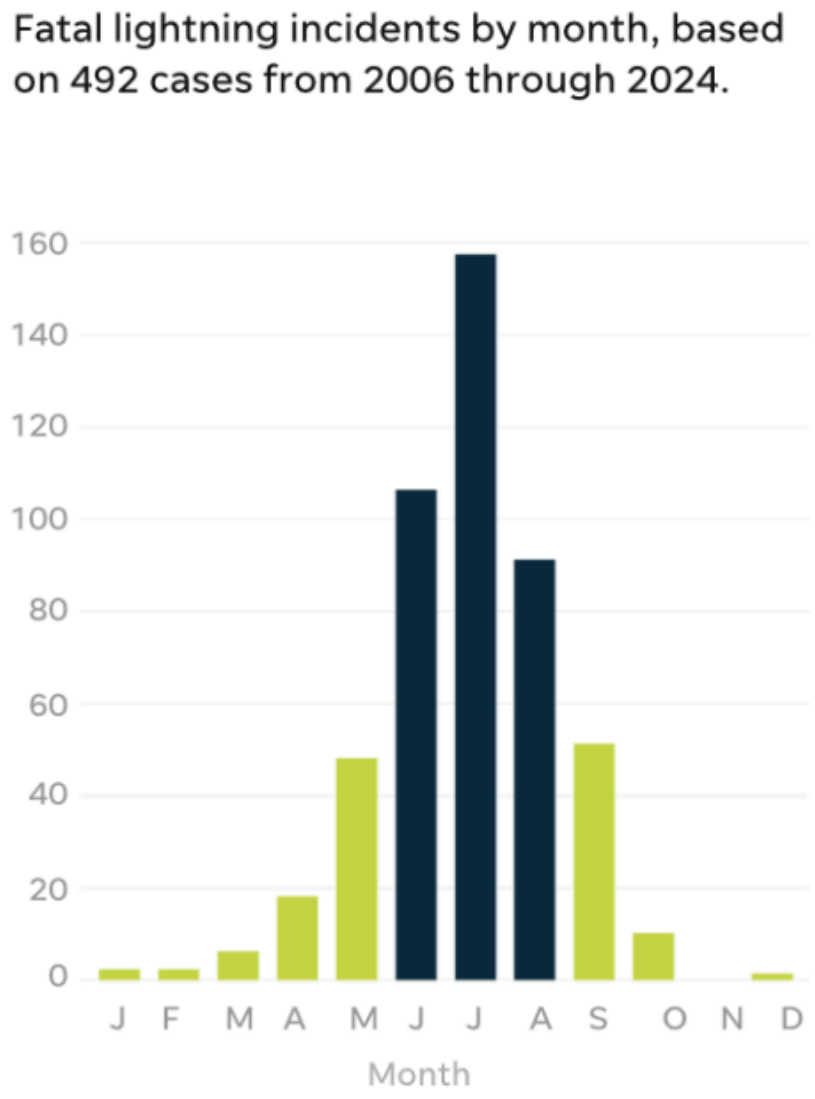
Lightning Deaths By State

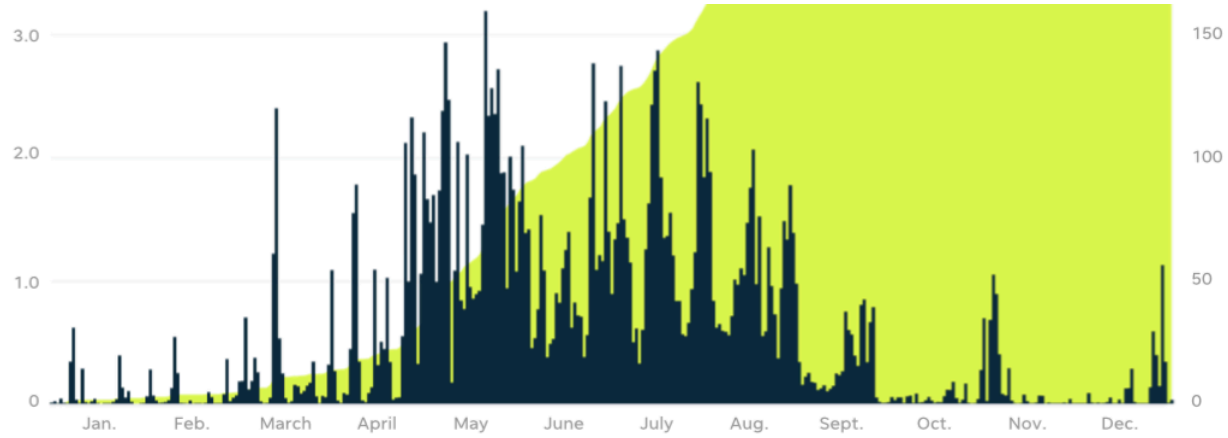
With the arrival of summer, lightning activity is expected to increase significantly. Over 70% of lightning-related fatalities occur during the summer months of June, July, and August—when outdoor activities are at their peak. According to National Weather Service data from 2006 to 2024, July alone accounts for nearly one-third of all lightning deaths each year.

Lightning ranks as the second deadliest weather-related hazard in the United States. However, in recent years, the number of fatalities caused by lightning has shown a consistent downward trend.



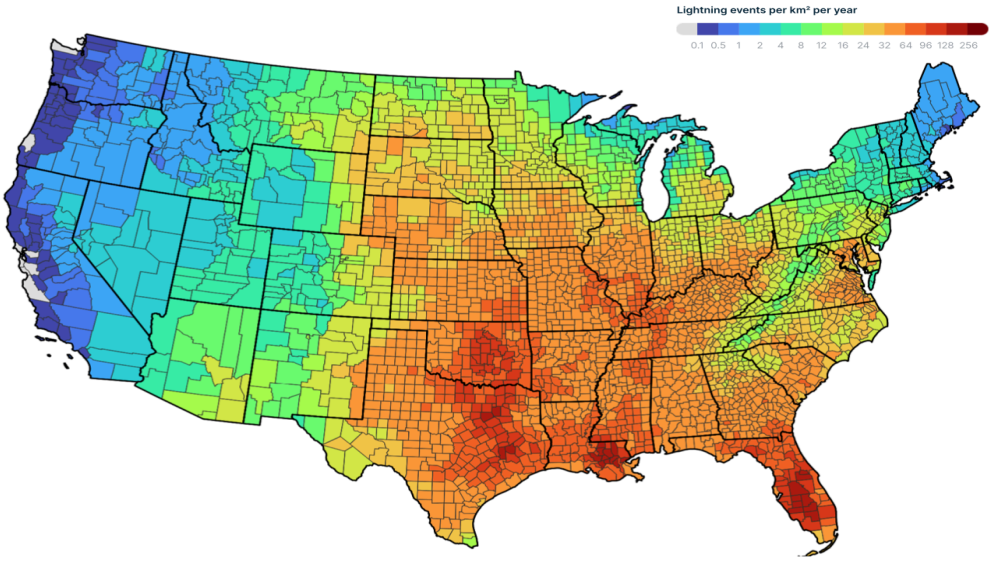
Source: National Lightning Safety Council

Lightning derives from thunderstorms. The essence of a thunderstorm is created as a result of both moisture and heat - as rapidly rising heat ascends within a supportive environment, convection is “born”. What happens to be the best possible chance of observing lightning with plenty of those necessary ingredients? Summer of course! We can visualize this data thanks to Vaisala lightning statistics. We see the large spiking coinciding with the warmest months of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.



U.S. Hotspots for Lightning Strikes

According to Vaisala Xweather, the regions with the highest frequency of lightning strikes are the South and Southeast (unsurprisingly)- notably the states of Texas, Oklahoma, and of course Florida. The graphic below represents total lightning density, but more specifically it's an average of the events per year based upon a 7-year average (2016-2023).



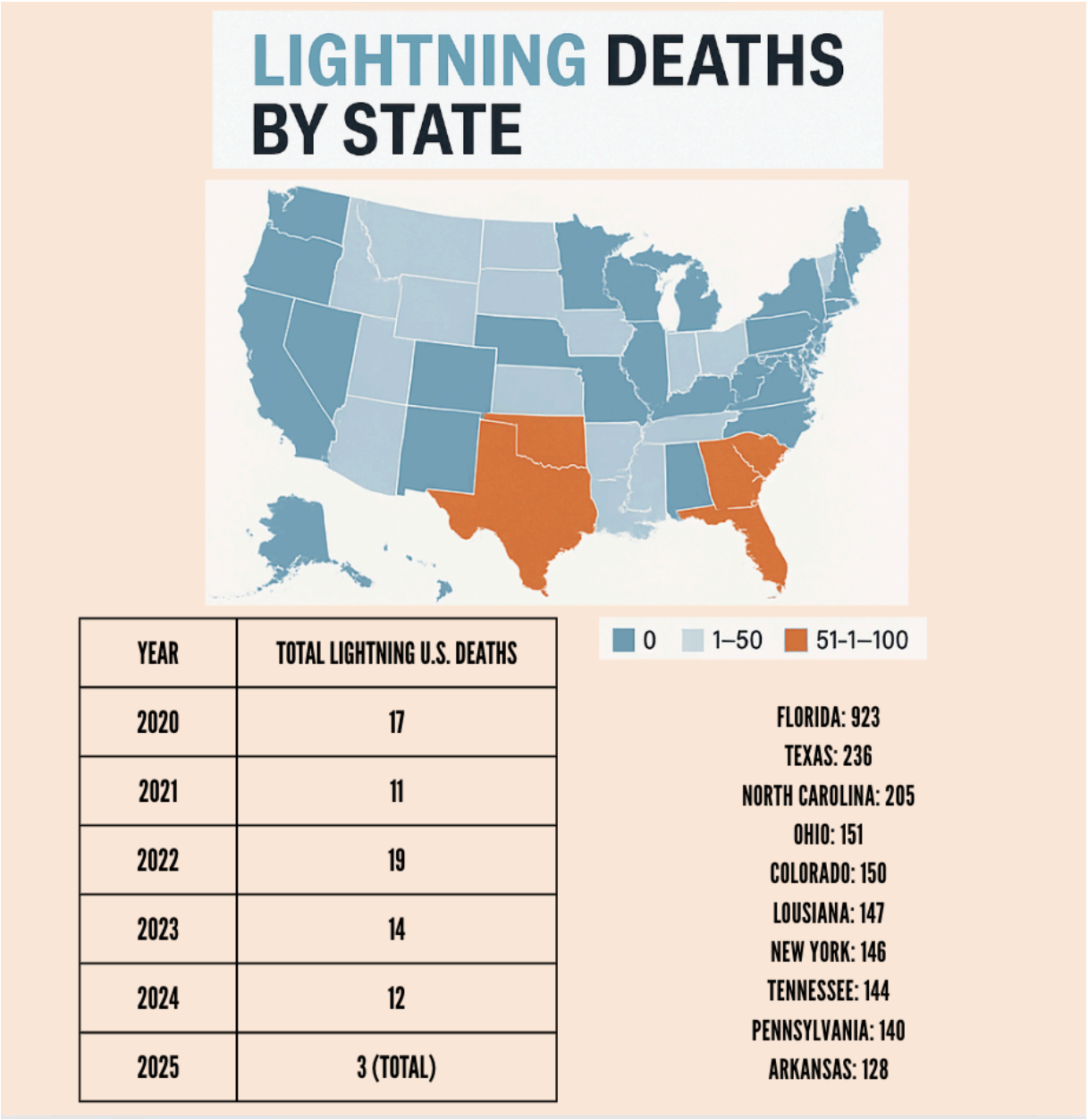
Bolts From The Blue

Out-of-the-blue lightning strikes, also called “bolts from the blue,” are rare but dangerous lightning strikes that originate from the top of a thunderstorm cloud and travel a long distance—up to 10 to 15 miles—away from the main storm before striking the ground. What makes these specific types of lightning strikes unique are a culmination of:

- **Clear Skies**: These strikes can hit even when there’s no rain and no thunder nearby—skies may look mostly clear or just partly cloudy.
- **Origin**: They come from the anvil or upper part of a cumulonimbus cloud, where the lightning bolt shoots out horizontally, then curves down to the ground far from the storm.
- **Abrupt and Unexpected**: Because there’s often no visible sign of an approaching storm, people can be caught completely off guard.

By the Numbers

The lightning statistics reveal that since 2006 to present day, the number-one leading state with lightning related deaths is Florida. This is then followed by Texas, North Carolina, Ohio, Colorado, Louisiana, New York, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and Arkansas in that order. Believe it or not, there are actually five states that have had **zero** reported lightning fatalities: Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, New Hampshire, and Washington. We’ve compiled a nice list to show this visually!



YEAR	TOTAL LIGHTNING U.S. DEATHS
2020	17
2021	11
2022	19
2023	14
2024	12
2025	3 (TOTAL)

Regional Trends & Risk Factors

- The southeastern U.S. observed the highest frequency—Florida, Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama regularly top the list every year.

- Certain mountain states (e.g. Colorado) have elevated per‑capita and per‑storm rates, especially due to high‑altitude recreational activity .
- Seasonal pattern: Most strikes and related deaths occur typically in the afternoon and early evenings during the summer months.
- The most at risk in terms of gender are men aged 20 to 49, which in comparison reveals a 4-to-1 ratio to women.
- Common activities associated with strikes: outdoor leisure (fishing, boating, beaches, golfing) contributes about two‑thirds of U.S. deaths. Then there are work-related fatalities that include farming, ranching, and landscaping.

Summary

- **Top states** with the most lightning deaths: Fl, TX, NC.
- **Zero-fatality states since 2006**: AK, DE, HI, NH, WA.
- **Annual deaths** hovered around 20 in the 2010s; this dropped to a record low of 11 in 2021; 19 in 2022; 12 in 2024; 3 so far in 2025.
- **High-risk factors**: summer, afternoon storms, outdoor leisure/work, male gender.