



LIVE TO FISH AND BOAT ANOTHER DAY

Fast moving, rapidly-forming storms are common in Highlands County especially in the summer months. Often times there is not much chance for advanced warning. These storms can bring very high winds, lightning, and heavy rain (occasionally hail).

Don't plan to go out for the day without checking on a reliable weather map or report. The best and easiest available source is the Weather Channel or any one of the official NWS or NOAA web sites.

When you see an approaching storm head for cover immediately. Lightning and high winds are NOT something to play with and can be life threatening.

When you do get caught, your most immediate problems are loss of visibility and high winds. And depending on your location, rapidly building seas. How you react and what you should do depends greatly on the size of your boat and the type of body of water you are on. No one can tell you precisely what the correct response is because every situation is different.

Obviously, if you're in a very small boat you are in big trouble if high seas becomes a threat along with the loss of visibility. The most important thing is to avoid panic and rash reactions. Here are some tips when caught in a lightning storm. Don't throw out the anchor. If you cannot see because of heavy rain hold yourself in position by heading into the wind and maintaining a slow speed. Don't run blindly in low to zero visibility rain. Wait for the heaviest rain to pass and than proceed.

In larger boats where you have any kind of structure around you, be it a cabin or just a Bimini top, you have a fair degree of safety. People in open boats are most at risk. The potential for injury increases if you have wet, bare feet. So, wearing rubbery tennis shoes is one help. Do not hold the radio mike; holding it is like strapping a lightning rod to your body.

In an open boat one is very vulnerable and there is not much you can do to avoid being a target except to avoid standing up. ALL boaters should learn to pay attention to weather and try to learn as much as one can about its behavior.