

The researchers based their calculation on 2011 weather data from across the U.S. They presented their results in a paper released Thursday by the journal Science.

Romps said the key is that warmer air holds more water vapor. Water vapor is fuel for thunderstorms, sparking more lightning. The energy that storms get from vapor is the biggest driver in increasing lightning strikes in the future, Romps said.

The new study shows that at any given level of rainfall intensity, there will be more lightning in the future.

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Little Known Secret To Putting In Solar Harold Brooks, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration severe storm meteorologist, said the study makes sense and marks an advance over previous work.

The result is important mostly because it means more natural sparks for dangerous wildfires, which are already forecast to worsen with man-made warming, Romps, Brooks and other meteorologists said.

Lightning deaths have been falling from about 100 per year in the 1960s and 1970s to 33 per year in the last decade. So far this year 25 people have been killed, NOAA data shows. Brooks said the drop is because of people changing their behavior to be safer in storms and better medical treatment of lightning victims.

The top states for lightning deaths in the past decade are Florida, Texas, Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina and New Jersey. About 80 percent of lightning victims are male.

Michael Mann, a Pennsylvania State University climate scientist, said this study "is yet another reminder that there are likely some unwelcome surprises in store ... when it comes to the impacts of climate change."

Online:

Journal Science: http://www.sciencemag.org

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NOAA's lightning safety page: http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/index.htm

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Seth Borenstein can be followed at http://twitter.com/borenbears

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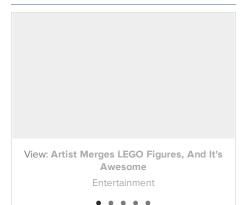
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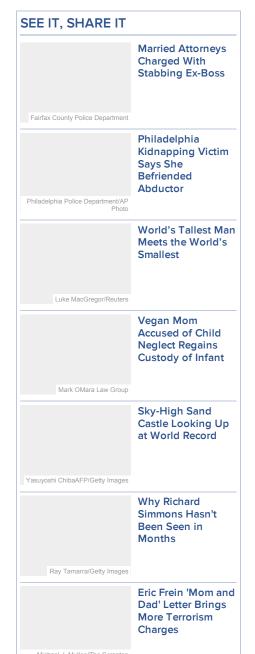
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