

Survivor Story: John
Emergency Dispatcher Becomes Victim

I was hit by lightning in August 2011 but apparently not a direct hit. I'm a little confused on how I was hit. I am a 45 year old male in average condition. The family has a history of heart problems. I had a physical a few weeks ago and didn't have any major issues. Blood pressure is good without medication.

I was standing in my mother's garage in Blair, WI. The farm is in the country near the base of a small hill. There are plenty of tall trees in the area. I was wearing shorts and a t-shirt and was barefoot standing on a throw rug talking with my mother while we were watching the storm. I was leaning against a large chest freezer with a window behind the freezer. The large garage door was open. My mother was two to three feet away from me. My wife was walking into the garage from the house and saw a huge flash. It was so bright she couldn't see where it came from. My mother felt the energy as arching came from the heels of my feet. She tingled all over. My butt and left hand were touching the freezer when it felt like I was being electrocuted by the freezer. I then noticed arching coming from my heels like someone set off a lot of fireworks under my feet. I'm assuming since my bare feet were on a rug that the arching was through my heels through the rug to the concrete floor.

It hurt. My bones hurt the most. My left shoulder and elbow immediately hurt as did my tailbone, legs and both heels. I either jumped or was lifted into the air about a foot. The arching stopped and I stood there in disbelief. I did not lose consciousness, nor fall to the ground. It was the weirdest feeling.

The remainder of the day, my body hurt but not enough to go to the hospital. I do not typically get headaches. Since the strike, I have had a headache at the base of my neck. On Saturday, I did not take any medication for the headache because I wanted to feel any pains or warnings in my body to determine if I needed to seek medical attention. My body felt kind of weird all that day. The next day, I took Tylenol for the headache and it helped a little but did not get rid of it completely. My right shoulder and neck are very tense. I used a stethoscope to listen to my heart since it didn't feel quite right. It would beat normal, then beat fast, then beat normal again. This lasted about a half an hour then it subsided. My neck and shoulder are still tense and I continue to have a slight headache.

Lessons to Learn: You are NOT safe in a garage with the door open. You need to be in a fully enclosed building with all doors and windows closed. Do not be in contact with electricity, such as the

freezer or with plumbing. Avoid standing in front of windows, especially in older buildings where the seal may not be tight.

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