

Lightning Consequences

A Cole Harbour, N.S., woman says she's feeling very lucky after being struck by lightning Saturday and escaping with no more than minor burns.

Amber Palmer and her women's softball team — the TBR Thunder — were at a field in Upper Tantallon, northwest of Halifax, when a storm rolled in.

"What happened was, I was locking up the canteen," said Palmer, 23. "We were having a fundraiser at the ball field and the building got struck as I was putting the key in the lock. So it came up my right arm, and down my right side and out my foot."

'That hit something'

The team decided to clear the field as heavy rain started to fall. The players heard thunder in the distance, but it seemed far away when Palmer set out across the field to do the final locking up. However, it quickly moved overhead, said team captain Terri-Lynn Rhyno, who was standing in a different part of the field.

"I don't think I've ever heard it that close — we all jumped," Rhyno said. "I actually screamed because it scared me. I said, 'That hit something.'"



'My shorts were blown to pieces,' said Palmer. (Amber Palmer)

The team guesses that the lightning hit a flagpole next to the canteen building, then jumped to the metal door of the canteen. From there, the team thinks the lightning travelled through the key, into Palmer.

Small scorch marks can still be seen around the lock of the door.

Thrown back to the ground

"I was conscious the whole time," Palmer said. "I saw the flash, and it threw me kind of back and on the ground. I landed on my back, with my hands and feet in the air, and I was completely numb and frozen. I couldn't move. I could only move my eyes and my legs. My arms, the muscles were all contracted and I couldn't move at all.

"I was completely numb. I couldn't feel anything."

One of the team members who was closest to Palmer screamed for the others to call 911.



The shirt Palmer was wearing has two large burn holes. (Amber Palmer)

"She was lying on her back on the ground," said Rhyno. "She looked really stiff, so when I first saw her I wasn't sure what was wrong with her. I didn't think she was going to be OK."

Overnight hospital stay

Palmer was checked by paramedics and taken to hospital, where she stayed Saturday night.

"Throughout the night all the nurses and the doctors would come in because they had never seen it before," Palmer said.

Palmer was discharged Sunday morning with a clean bill of health. Her only injuries were what resemble sunburn marks down her right side.



Palmer says her injuries just feel like a sunburn, although her muscles are all very tired. (Amber Palmer)

"I think I was just extremely lucky — it didn't follow the path of my heart, it just went down the side of me," Palmer said. "I think the worst burns are where the stitches were. I had ball pants on, and it's kind of tight to my skin, so some of the burns follow the stitch patterns."

Found sock in the canteen

"It feels like a sunburn," Palmer said. "It's not that bad. The worst is my muscles are just really tired."

Her clothes did not fare as well, she said. The shirt she was wearing has two large burn holes in it.

"My shorts were blown to pieces, and when we found my sock in the canteen the next day, it had a big hole in the bottom of it," she said.