

## Lightning kills friends [South Africa]

By LULAMILE FENI on February 20, 2016

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A Mthatha village teenager was left distraught after two of his best friends were struck and killed by lightning while walking home from school on Thursday.



ESCAPED: Sifiso Maphoyi, 16, at the spot where five of his friends were struck by lightning at Matolweni village near Mthatha on Thursday when he stayed at school to wait for a friend who had his books Picture: LULAMILE FENI

Three other boys, including Sifiso Maphoyi's elder brother Litha, were seriously injured.

The five friends, all from Mthentu Junior Secondary School in Mthentu Village about 60km from Mthatha, were walking home from school to Matolweni Village when the tragedy occurred at about 3pm.

Sifiso, 16, was saved because he decided to wait for another schoolboy who had some of his books. "So my friends and Litha decided to leave me behind as they were rushing to their homes because the weather was becoming terrible," said Sifiso yesterday.

The five pupils decided to walk on the main road connecting the two villages – Mthentu and Matolweni – while Sifiso and the other boy took a short-cut. "We have been taught not to walk in the road when there is lightning or storms," said Sifiso yesterday.

He said the storm closed in and they heard a loud bang. "We did as we were taught at school and home and fell flat on the ground. After a while we stood up. I could see the other five boys had also dropped but they did not wake up.

"We thought that they were playing a trick and we ignored them and walked our way. But, I later realised that something might have happened to them as they did not even wake up even though it was raining.

"Panicking I decided to check on them, but a car with school teachers from the local primary school arrived first," he said. "But, Siyamcela [Hlubi] and Lindisapho [Ndlanyana] were already dead. While I can say I am lucky, I am devastated that two of my best friends died and others including my brother are seriously injured.