

Lightning strike kills 18 children in Uganda

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/weather/8606238/Lightning-strike-kills-18-children-inUganda.html>

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A lightning strike has killed 18 children and their teacher in Uganda, police said.



School children who survived after lightning struck their classroom receive treatment at Kiryandongo hospital

Photo: REUTERS

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Uganda has one of the highest rates of lightning strike deaths in the world and its capital Kampala has more days of lightning per year than any other city, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

The lightning hit the victims in a classroom at a school in Kiryandongo, 210km (130 miles) north of Kampala, police said. Another 38 children were admitted to hospital.

The East African country has suffered a wave of fatal lightning strikes in recent weeks during unseasonably heavy rains.

The deaths were debated in parliament on Monday, with MPs calling on the government to come up with strategy to deal with what several termed "a crisis".

"I don't know which minister is in charge of the lightning but let the government come up with a statement to inform the country on what is going on and how we can manage it," Speaker Rebecca Kadaga said.

Local meteorologists have criticised the government for not providing enough lightning conductors for buildings in storm hot spots.

"The 19 were killed in single lightning strike on Monday," a police spokesman said. "They were ready to leave school but there was a heavy downpour and so they sheltered in the classroom and then, all of a sudden, it struck."

Police said 15 of the 38 injured on Monday were still in hospital being treated for burns. Local media quoted medical officials in Kiryandongo predicting the death toll could rise.

The state owned New Vision newspaper said on Tuesday that at least 40 people had been killed by lightning strikes in recent weeks. The police did not give an official death toll.

Many of the strikes have killed children. Three siblings aged four, six and eight were killed while sheltering under a tree on their way home from school last week and another two children were killed the week before, police said.