

Name: _____

10 Minutes with Science

Lightning



Lightning is the emission of light or the momentary glow that accompanies the bolt. Many times, these terms get confused, the lightning is not the bolt itself, but rather the light that produces.

Some lightning doesn't reach the earth's surface, it is electric shocks or bolts produced inside the clouds.

Why do lightning strikes occur? When it rains, the ground surface heat causes a natural evaporation of the falling water; bringing the heated water vapor back to the clouds. Meanwhile, at a height of 2.5 to 3 kilometers, it is much colder, because the temperature reaches 15 to 20 degrees below zero, and ice particles are produced that fall because of gravity and collide with the hot water vapor molecules rising because of evaporation. This crash creates an electric field. When the electric field becomes strong enough, there is a transfer of charges known as bolts which produce the light from the flash of lightning.

The Catatumbo River basin, south of Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela, South America produces the most lightning in the world. There an atmospheric phenomenon that occurs called Catatumbo Lightning, where continuous lightning occurs about 240 days a year and produces more than a million lightning bolts in a year.

