

Lightning kills 18 schoolchildren and their teacher as they shelter in classroom after lessons end

By DAILY MAIL REPORTER

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A teacher and 18 primary schoolchildren were killed by lightning as they sheltered in their classroom during storms in Uganda.

A total of 15 girls and three boys died when the thunderbolt struck the building in Kiryandongo, 130 miles north of capital Kampala.

Another 38 pupils from Runyanya Primary School were injured and it is feared the death toll may rise as 15 children are still in hospital being treated for burns.



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Tragic: Bodies of some of the children killed by lightning are wrapped in papyrus and carried from a mortuary in Kiryandongo, Uganda, to be buried by their relatives

They had finished lessons for the day and were waiting for a heavy rain to subside when the disaster happened 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.'

Dr Jimmy Eyiiga, the Kiryandongo medical superintendent, revealed that some children at risk of dying had been sent to a specialist hospital in the capital.

Three other people in different locations across the East African country were killed by lightning on the same day after a wave of fatal storms in recent weeks.

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



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Suffering: Some of the 38 children injured by lightning at Kiryandongo hospital

The latest deaths have been debated in parliament, with MPs calling on the government to come up with strategy to deal with the 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 hotspots.

In recent weeks at least 40 people had been killed by lightning, with children the victims in many of the strikes.

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.