

# Lightning strikes girls



Daniel J. Carroll

Rescuers huddle around two girls, one lying down and one kneeling, who were struck by lightning Monday.

## Two injured on beach in storm

By JOHN ROBINSON  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Two girls were struck by lightning as they ran from a rainshower on Twin Lakes State Beach Monday afternoon.

The girls, identified as Kirsten Olson, 13, of Quincy and Robyn Mueller, 14 of Campbell, were reported in stable condition Monday night at Community Hospital, undergoing tests for internal injuries and treatment for "superficial" burns.

Witnesses said a lightning bolt, described as a ball of fire, struck the girls shortly after 5 p.m.

"It came straight down and hit them both in the back," said photographer Daniel Carroll, who saw the lightning strike from the deck of his home across from the beach. "It was like a brilliant red-orange fireball — the color of a flare. It propelled them forward and they landed belly down."

Carroll called the Harbor Patrol on a short-wave radio and ran to the girls. They apparently were conscious, but in shock and unable to speak or move, Carroll said.

He covered one with a blanket and got the other to sit up, he said.

"I was trying to get them off the beach in case there was more lightning," he said.

Ted Wharburton, deputy harbormaster and a trained paramedic, said the girls were visibly burned. He said the burns appeared serious, and that the lightning had partially melted a synthetic bathing suit worn by one of the girls.

"The rain started falling and people were running off the beach when it hit," Carroll said. "I had seen a fishing boat get hit (by lightning) a couple of minutes before and I was standing on my deck," hoping to photograph the lightning when the girls were struck.

Please see **STORM** — A14

A commercial fishing boat, the 43-foot Carol Cee, was struck thrice by lightning as it approached the harbor shortly before the girls were hit.

"We were coming back in and we saw all the lightning over the mountains and it just kept coming closer," boat-owner Bob Clark said.

"Just inside the one-mile bouy we heard a little sound of an electrical charge up in the flying bridge and then all the sudden the whole top of the boat lit up like someone was arc welding."

Two minutes later a second bolt struck, hitting the metal outriggers used for salmon trolling.

"It was the same sound, like an electrical charge building, and we lit up again," Clark said. "It burnt three of the wires right off the gurneys. Just singed them right off. They were about 8 to 10 feet above my head. My son-in-law (on the lower deck) said that sparks were flying everywhere."

The bolts also burned out the boat's radio, depth finder, damaged

**'We saw them  
running across  
the beach, trying  
to get in away  
from the stuff.'**

*— Bob Clark,  
boat owner*

the compass, drained the boat's batteries and damaged a power converter so that it would not turn off, Clark said.

A third bolt hit the boat just outside the harbor.

"A couple minutes later it hit again and that's when the kids started running. We saw them running across the beach, trying to get in away from the stuff. Then it started pouring rain.

"I was so darned scared I didn't notice any shock or anything. I just wanted to get in. It was crazy. The

thunder was just echoing across the water."

The thunderstorms were caused by an influx of moist air drawn to the north from a tropical depression off Baja, said Robert Brown, a National Weather Service forecaster. As the day heats up and the warm air meets the moisture coming off the ocean, thunderclouds begin building. Such storms are not unusual, Brown said.

The storms, which dropped only a trace of rain in Santa Cruz, were expected to subside during the night, forecasters said. But in the Santa Cruz Mountains an electrical storm lit up the Bonny Doon area.

Dan Cooper, a Bear Creek Road resident, estimated that 60 to 80 lightning bolts lit the sky for about an hour around 10 p.m.

"You look up and the moon is shining." Cooper said. "It's strange."

Cooper said that no rain was falling, but a smell of ozone permeated the air.

The unsettled weather and thunderstorms were expected to last through tonight.