

A Catawba County couple were rushed from the Blue Ridge Parkway to Cannon Memorial after a bolt of lightning struck the tree the two were seeking shelter under from that line of quickly approaching thunderstorms that raked the area from mid afternoon through the evening. The lightning strike happened very close to Grandfather mountain near mile marker 306 around 3 yesterday afternoon. Two U-S Park Rangers arriving at the scene said that the bolt appeared to have struck the top of a hemlock, blasting shards of wood across the pavement at the overlook, injuring the man and woman who had ridden in on their motorcycle. Rangers said today it was evident that the woman was injured by a direct lightning strike, with entry and exit burns on her body. She has been transferred to Carolinas Medical Center and is in stable condition, her husband released after treatment from injuries more from the explosion of the tree. Parkway Police did not release the names of the Newton couple.