

Deadly Wabasso Lightning Storm

September 20, 2003

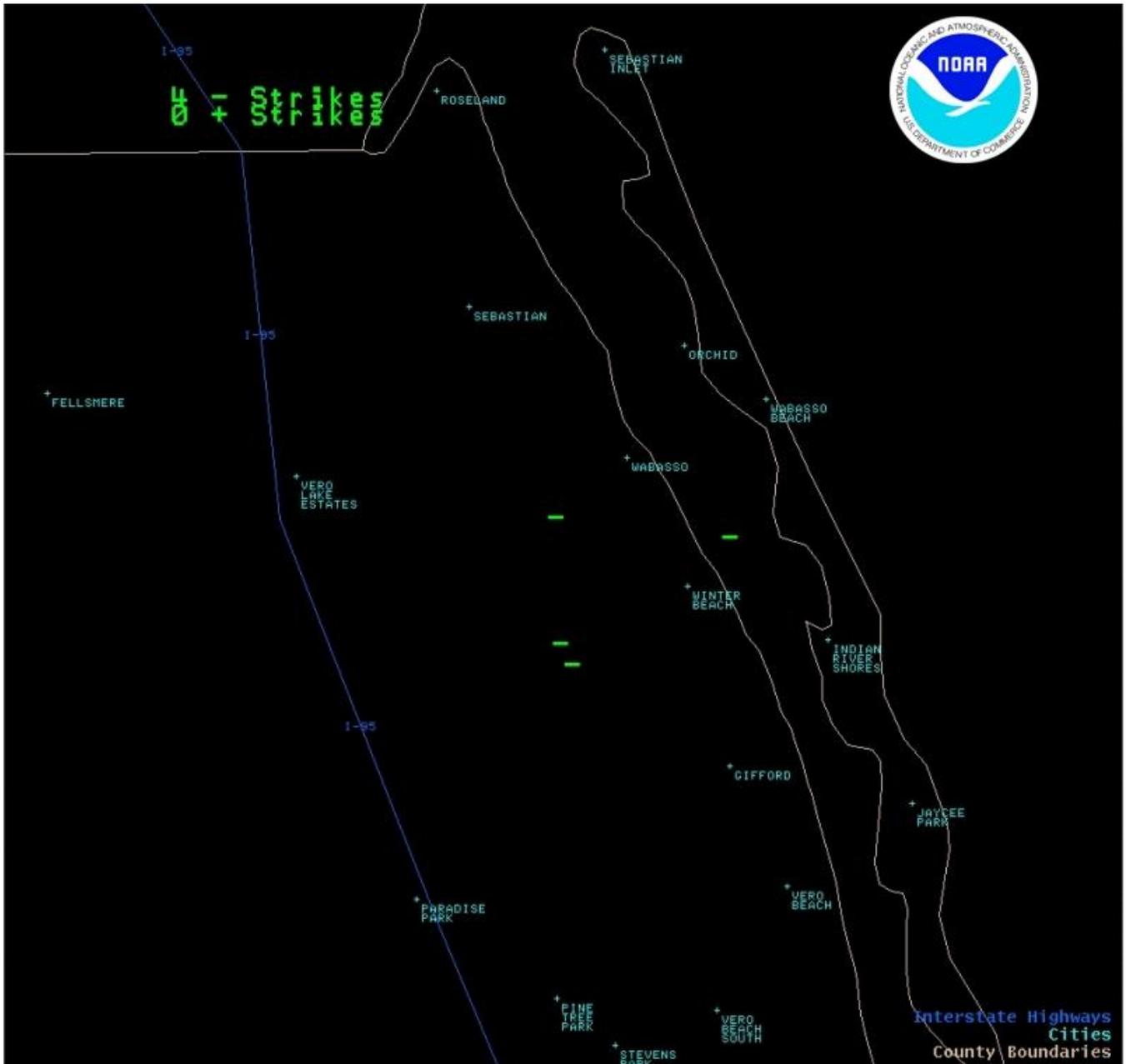
On September 20th 2003, a 46 year old female physical education teacher was killed by a bolt of lightning while on a soccer complex west of Wabasso in Indian River County.



Many people near the victim were knocked to the ground by the bolt, and about 20 people were treated by emergency personnel. Two children and two other adults were transported to a local hospital.

This was an unusual event in that the fatality occurred just before 11 am, and there had been no lightning activity in the area prior to the fatal strike. Deep easterly wind had set up across the area, and a few rapidly developing rain showers moved on shore. There was just enough vertical development to produce a minimal thunderstorm. The storm that crossed Indian River County produced only 4 or 5 cloud-to-ground strikes. It appears that the first strike to occur hit the victim.

A more typical wet season late afternoon Florida thunderstorm can produce hundreds of cloud-to-ground strikes. Historically most lightning fatalities in Florida occur in June, July, August and September with an average of 10 fatalities a year.



Depiction of total lightning strikes in the area between 10:30 and 11:00 am