KUALA LUMPUR: Thunderstorm safety education should be made compulsory in schools as early measure to prevent mishaps from occurring, says a lightning protection expert from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

Director of Centre of Excellence on Lightning Protection (CELP) UPM, Assoc Prof Dr Mohd Zainal Abidin Ab Kadir said society is not that concerned with safety as outdoor activities are still conducted during thunderstorms.

“When thunderstorms occur, all indoor and outdoor activities must stop until it is over to avoid damage to property and personal injury.”

The public are only aware of the danger posed by thunderstorms and take preventive measures after deaths, injuries and damage to property occur,” he told Bernama here yesterday.

A student of SMK Seksyen 16, Shah Alam died after he was struck by lightning while his friend was injured on April 3 after playing in a Petaling District school football tournament in UPM.

“The students were still doing sports activities during a thunderstorm. Teachers and parents must be responsible in exposing students to thunderstorm safety just like road safety education in schools.”

Zainal said UPM would work with the Ministry of Education to ensure thunderstorm safety awareness campaign could be held in schools.

“The campaign is not only for teachers and students but also to encourage public participation to ensure safety and to take early preventive measures,” he said.

Asked about safety measures during thunderstorms, he said the public should avoid being in open space and should take shelter in buildings for protection.

“During thunderstorms, try not to stand near trees, stay away from metal items and tall pillars,” he said.

Zainal proposed that all houses be equipped with devices to prevent lightning strike during thunderstorms to ensure the safety of occupants.

“The Ministry of Housing should introduce legislation where all houses must be installed with anti-lighting devices to ensure the safety of residents.”

He advised the public to check the weather when planning outdoor activities and to avoid them if there were signs of thunderstorms for personal safety. - Bernama