Student killed by lightning at high school track meet

POSTED: 8:00 p.m. EDT, April 1, 2007

CARBONDALE, Illinois (AP) -- A lightning strike killed a high school runner as he left a pole vault pit shortly before a track meet, the county coroner said.

"It came out of nowhere," said Scott Hankey, Carbondale Community High School's baseball coach, whose team was preparing for a game nearby. "There was a very, very light rain. There wasn't anything in the way of dark clouds. It didn't look anything like a thunderstorm."

Corey Williams, 18, was returning to the main track area from the pole vault pit about 4 p.m. when the lightning bolt hit him. Coaches and others tried to revive him, but he was pronounced dead by the time he reached a hospital.

Thomas Kupferer, Jackson County's coroner, confirmed that lightning killed the teenager.

When Williams was struck, National Weather Service radar showed some lightning in the area, but it was not considered significant enough to issue an advisory or warning, meteorologist Mike Nadolksi said Friday.

More than 200 people attended a candlelight vigil for Williams on Thursday night, and classes at the school were canceled Friday to give the students time to grieve. Williams' mother, Vanessa Webb, shared hugs with dozens of the students.

"This was my son. Why did this happen?" she said.

Classmate Robert Krajewski described Williams as laid back and "just a really nice guy."