

## *What is the difference between a power strip and a surge protector?*

Many people are confused about the difference between a power strip and a surge protector. That is why, when they run out of power outlets, they go out and buy the first low dollar item to give them more outlets. I'm all for saving money where I can, but not at the expense of the new 50" HD Plasma TV and accompanying surround sound system that I just purchased. A power strip will give me the ability to power these new items, but when that first electrical storm comes around, I'm at risk of losing all that equipment.

Don't forget that power surges are not caused by lightning only. Utility work, adverse weather conditions, or even something as simple as electric motor activity within a home (air conditioners, copiers, printers and refrigerators, for instance) can cause power fluctuations. Surge protectors extend the lifetime of sensitive electronic equipment by protecting it against harmful power surges and over-voltage problems.

So now that you're ready purchase that new surge protector, are you sure that what you're looking at will protect you against a lightning strike? A lot of people forget that power outlets are not the only thing that can be compromised in a strike. A power surge can also come in through the cable or telephone lines. So even with a standard surge protector, you could still lose you TV because there is no protection on your cable line. The same applies to your computer, regardless of whether you have DSL or cable.

It is possible for a surge to come in across the phone line, hit the DSL modem, continue on through the network cable and hit the router (assuming you have one), continue on through any or all of the network cables attached to the router and end up hitting your computer through the network port and rendering your system useless. Any of the items along the path of the surge may also have been damaged in the process.

If you want to protect your equipment, make sure that you purchase the proper surge protector. Things to look for when purchasing a surge protector are power outlets (of course), phone line input-output, cable input-output, and network input-output. Also look for a higher Joule rating (over 1,000) and some sort of protection insurance for the connected equipment. You may also want to contact your local electrician for information about home point-of-entry surge protection.