

Lightning Can Cause Power Surges

This month, our heroes are trying to use their lightning lasers to fend off giant vampire chickens, but something is going horribly wrong. The darn chickens are soaking up the power and growing bigger!

Even in real life, we have to be concerned about the effect of power surges. A lightning strike is the strongest kind of power surge, but it's not the only cause of sudden surges of electricity. About half of all power surges come from inside your home when household appliance motors cycle on and off, like in a refrigerator or an air conditioner. Over time, these small surges can ruin many of the appliances and other electronic equipment you use every day. That's because appliances like washing machines, stereos, desktop computers, VCRs and DVD players are very sensitive to any change in electric current.

Besides lightning, there are other power surges that can come into your home from the outside. These surges can travel through telephone, cable or electric lines. And just like a surge zapped Electrillo's electro-copter last month, large power surges can instantly ruin electronics.

Power surges can be prevented from damaging electrical appliances if you have a defense system called a "surge suppressor." There are many different kinds of surge suppressors. Some protect the whole house from outside power surges; these should be installed by an electrician. Other surge suppressors protect individual appliances from power surges inside the house and must be installed at each electric appliance. If one appliance is not protected, it can send a power surge to other appliances!

Have a grownup call your electric co-op to learn more about protecting your home and your electric appliances from lightning and other power surges. It might be too late for the electro-copter, but it's not too late to protect your prized possessions!

Cartoonist Keith Graves is a popular artist and author of children's books.

