



Protecting Sensitive Equipment From Power Surges

*“During the storm last week, a power surge fried my computer!
Will the PUD pay for the damages?”*

You or someone you know may have been in a similar situation. We field a lot of calls, particularly after storms, from people who have had electronics damaged by power surges or other abnormal conditions on the electric system. Most people want to know whether the PUD will cover the damages. While there are limited sets of circumstances where we will reimburse customers for damaged equipment, the answer to that question is usually “No”.



When will the PUD provide reimbursement? We only cover damages when the problem is the result of PUD negligence. One example of this might be a service wire that was not connected properly. When the cause of the problem is equipment failure or an “act of God” such as high wind or a lightning strike, we do not provide reimbursement for damages. In those cases, customers need to rely on homeowner’s or renter’s insurance to cover damages.



To avoid the damage in the first place, there are some steps you can take to protect sensitive equipment. There are a variety of surge suppression devices available. These usually look something like a plug strip, where one end is plugged into a normal wall outlet, and the other end has a number of outlets so that you can plug in all the different pieces of electronic equipment in your living room, for example.

A word of caution: not all surge suppression devices are created equal. It’s worth it to purchase one of good quality, or you may not be getting the protection you think you are. Also be aware that surge suppression devices can be damaged by power surges, and may no longer provide adequate protection after experiencing one or more surges.

Another thing you can do is unplug sensitive electronics during an outage and plug them in only after the power has been back on for a few minutes. Sometimes, when power is restored after an outage, there can be voltage fluctuations as the system is restored, which can damage your equipment. When these fluctuations do occur, they usually stop after a few moments, making it safe to plug things in again.

If you have damages that you believe were caused by negligence on the part of the PUD, you can request reimbursement by filling out a claim form. The form and instructions to file a claim can be found on our website at www.ghpud.org or contact PUD Administrative Services Coordinator Tracy Dugas at 360-538-6503 or tdugas@ghpud.org.