

# SUMMER HOME

Supplement  
to the  
Record-Eagle

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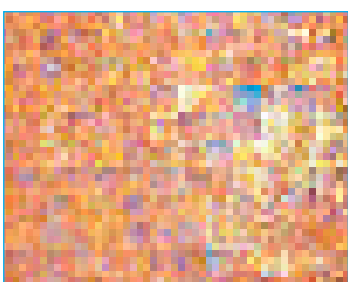
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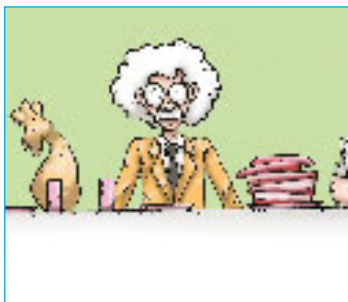
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Special Sections Editor Rick Gould can be reached at 933-1407 or [rgould@record-eagle.com](mailto:rgould@record-eagle.com)

## Don't let lightning strike twice with home equipment and appliances



Photo courtesy of Jim Bovin

By SHEILA GARRETT

Special to the Record-Eagle

**W**ild storms, lightning strikes and violent summer weather of all kinds can cause damage to a power supply. Valuable electronic equipment and appliances can be ruined.

Lightning does not have to strike a home directly to cause problems. It can travel across electrical lines and threaten items in a home nearby. Problems vary, depending on whether the strike is very close, or miles away.

Power surges, which may be caused by lightning, are sudden increases of electricity in the circuits. Although they may be storm related, surges can be caused by events at a power plant or even by conditions in the home.

Most household appliances are able to cope with small power surges, experts say, but sensitive equipment, like computers, are much more susceptible than other items. All agree that the most sensible move is to unplug vulnerable electronic devices, such as computers, microwaves, answering machines, VCRs, stereo systems and televisions, if a storm should strike. But what can be done to protect the home

when no one is there?

Bob Schramski, residential and commercial manager at Advantage Electric, Traverse City, says that nothing is 100 percent effective against lightning, but steps can be taken to minimize risks.

"Lightning can't be stopped, but the best defense is a good offense," he said. "An electric system should be installed correctly and grounded correctly. Lightning looks for the weakest link — it will look through the entire system and do damage."

In high elevations, more protection is required. This is also true of metal towers that attract lightning, and of metal objects, such as satellite dishes. Protection for these should be installed by professionals, he advised. Antennas and weather vanes should also be protected.

"In a good, grounded path, lightning will go to ground," he said.

Homeowners wanting whole house surge suppressors must have them installed by a licensed contractor. Clients can purchase add-on suppressors for computers, CD players and entertainment sound systems, as required. "One manufacturer will warranty up to 25 years for the entire package," he said.

Bill Hooke, sales consultant in computers at Circuit City in Traverse City, advises that the best

thing is to buy a battery backup surge protector. If there is any fluctuation in power, it automatically switches to a battery, he explained. "These can be purchased for from \$40 to \$140," he said, "You can plug a light, a refrigerator or a cordless phone into it, for a short time."

The next step down, he said, is a power surge protector, which sells for 9.99 to \$60 at Circuit City. He advises that customers buy the highest joule rating they can possibly afford.

Hooke pointed out the danger to unprotected computer modems. "Modems are the first to go," he explained, "because the power surges come right through the phones. We sell a lot of modems in the summer."

Surge protectors come in many varieties, with a rating, indicating the amount of energy they can absorb before they themselves become overwhelmed, said Jim Brye, owner of Radio Shack in Suttons Bay.

A basic model, costing about \$10, would have six outlets, and be capable of handling 250 joules. This size, however, does not come with modem protection, which Brye agrees is essential for the computer owner.

"We get a lot of surges and lightning in Leelanau County," he said, "and many people find out that the modem itself

becomes the surge protection."

Brye stressed that there does not have to be a storm to produce a power surge.

"We get surges through the phone lines," he explained, "resulting in many wrecked modems, also answering machines and phones."

Surges can also occur after a brownout happens, he said. "This is called 'dirty,' or inconstant, power," said Brye.

A phone line protector is a little cube that provides protection for phone devices such as faxes, modems and answering machines, "and at only \$10, it's a cheap insurance policy," he said.

A recommended model for computer network and cable modem protection features eight outlets and handles 1,284 joules.

"It has a place for a cable to run through, and is valuable protection if you get a cable surge," he said. "A lot of cable facilities are located on top of phone poles. This surge protector comes with a \$25,000 equipment guarantee."

Another important capability that it features, he said, is a noise filter. "There are devices in everyone's home that create radio waves and interference. A noise filter is especially valuable for computer networks and home theater systems."

The most sophisticated protec-

Some tips on protecting appliances and electronics:

- When buying an appliance that depends on an internal clock or timer (e.g., answering machine), buy one with a battery backup and make sure to replace it on a yearly basis.

- The following items are listed as sensitive to normal electric variations: personal computers, home security systems, cordless phones and answering machines, TVs, VCRs and DVD players, stereo equipment, microwave oven clocks, garage door openers, satellite receivers, home energy management systems, fax machines, devices that display time and any device that needs constant power.

- Minimize interference from motors and other large loads by placing sensitive equipment on separate circuits.

- If someone in your home is dependent on medical equipment requiring electricity, make arrangements in advance for an alternative power source for emergencies.

tors condition the power that comes through them. They offer uninterrupted power supplies, and the output is regulated so that there will be no inconsistency in energy output, no high-low, high-low fluctuations. When you get lower power than the computer requires, it starts to shut down its less essential operations in order to protect your data.

"You may get a momentary freeze. A mouse may fail to operate," he said. "Then when the power comes up, it may damage your hard drive."

These more comprehensive protectors have battery backup, so that in the event of a power failure, the operator gets 10 - 16 minutes extra to complete unfinished work. At \$100, this device is adequate for a typical personal computer, Brye stated.

When buying a new appliance, experts agree, don't throw away the tags and the owner's manual that come in the package. These instructions can be invaluable when servicing an older appliance, and they may be required if an item has to be returned.

Finally, consumers should remember that surge protectors do not last forever. They should be replaced when the manufacturers advise.

Sheila Garrett is a local freelance writer.

## The guest room doesn't have to be the second-best room

By NANCY SUNDSTROM

Special to the Record-Eagle

**W**hen you live in the Traverse City area, you expect that visitors will make their way up north to come to enjoy the city and the surrounding area.

You want your guests to make the most of their time here, and in your home, especially when they've accepted your invitation for a stay. Once that formality is out of the way, preparations are the next item on the agenda, and the list should start with making sure you have a proper guest room for them.

Many home owners in the Grand Traverse region say that they build or purchase a house with entertaining guests in mind. You don't necessarily need to create a hotel-like atmosphere, but there are certain guidelines to consider when you create a space for visitors to relax in, especially given that they are within the confines of someone else's residence.

Lynn Pettyjohn, an interior designer and owner of Lynnteriors in Traverse City, said that a basic rule of thumb for guest rooms is to put yourself in the mindset of being a guest yourself.

"Their room is a retreat territory, so make sure that whether you provide a sitting area or a quiet space, they have somewhere to have time to themselves, rest, read a book, or dress — just as long as they have some place that affords them privacy from the rest of your household activities," said Pettyjohn.

"If you can provide amenities that we're all used to, like perhaps a coffee pot, fans, blinds

to shut out strong light, an alarm clock, lamp light to read by, or any of a number of other creature comforts, you'll be ahead of the game. Think about what would please you. In other words, picture yourself as a guest in your own home."

Joan Davenport, now an office manager at Fifth Third Bank, spent more than 20 years in the hotel industry, and knows a lot about making guests feeling comfortable. She recently converted part of her basement into a bedroom with an attached bath.

"I wanted to have a place for my sisters to stay when they visited, so I went with creams and neutral colors, and then furnished it with my grandmother's antique mahogany bedroom set that I inherited and placed a lot of family photos in the room," said Davenport. "It turned out well, it's a comfortable room and with the bathroom, there's privacy for whoever's staying there."

Some of the guest room projects Pettyjohn has worked on recently include the period-correct renovation of an in-town Victorian home, which has involved incorporating many different fabrics in the colors of blues, golds and goldenrods, all of which combine for a color scheme that is suitable for guests of either gender; a log home in the woods where the guest room has a bed with log posts; and a Torch Lake home where the master bedroom is connected to the guest area and has an English Garden theme with jewel tones like teal, turquoise, and robin egg blue, accented with floral patterns.

Another was a home on Lake Leelanau for a family in Chicago who use it as a getaway spot. For their guest room, Pettyjohn

chose a color palate of red, gold and green, which she determined would be pleasant for both men and women of different age ranges. She incorporated a faux treatment on the walls, white carpeting, and a window seat area with dark red

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Record-Eagle/Elizabeth Conley

Traverse City interior designer Lynn Pettyjohn displays sketches, material swatches and photos that were used in a recent guest room renovation. The room, part of a Victorian-style home, has a decor that incorporates many different fabrics in classic colors such as blues, golds and goldenrods. The fabric in the right photo was used for pillows. The trim in the bottom left photo is part of the bed's headboard and the bottom right photo shows a sketch for a reversible bedspread.

