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August 10, 2006

Powerful Protection

It can happen in a flash. One good power surge can wreck havoc on a homeowner's wiring infrastructure, in essence ruining thousands of dollars worth of automated home technology equipment. In the end, it is typically homebuilder that receives the first phone call immediately following.

Eric Rose, managing partner with E.M. Rose Building Co., www.emrose.net, Branford, Conn., recalls instances where \$20,000-\$40,000 worth of equipment was destroyed within a home due to a power surge during a storm. In his opinion, a home filled with custom electronics can be "an absolute invitation to get hit by lightning."

This is why Rose, who builds high-end custom homes, makes certain surge protection is managed correctly in his developments. Installing highly customized lighting and a/v controls for homeowners, Rose says surge protection is a mandatory component of the electrical engineer's scope that needs to be fool proof.

"(Automated home technology) is a big risk item and if something gets fried the client will not want to pay to get it fixed," says Rose. "If you do just some surge protection you might as well have done nothing at all. If surge protection isn't total, voltage will find its way into the home and (destroy) whatever it can.

"If I can get surge protection from my (technology) vendor guaranteeing replacement of their equipment if damaged, that is the vendor I would prefer to rely on," says Rose. "If not, we would require the project electrical engineer to design and specify surge protection to achieve 100% protection across all systems and all entry points of the building so our electrician could supply and install it."

Surge protection is becoming an important component to more offerings from manufacturers. For instance, Channel Vision, www.channelvision.com, Costa Mesa, Calif., recently released its P-0411 module that serves as a DSL (digital subscriber line) noise filter, telephone surge protector, and RJ-31X security system interface. The company says this module is ideal for homeowners that rely on telephone and data service through ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line), which is a form of DSL.



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The module protects the Telco line at the point of entry. This helps block power surges before they can damage key systems in the home, including telephone, DSL modems, security systems, and more. It can be easily installed to a DSL modem and an RJ-31X connection for security systems requiring a telephone line interrupt. The module also supports A-BUS paging.

Homebuilders working with automated home technology deem surge protection as one of the hidden requirements of a successful implementation. Working with a technology vendor or installation professional that can assure total surge protection throughout a home's technology infrastructure can save the builder thousands of dollars in costs as well as an unexpected call from a dissatisfied homeowner.