

Protecting your Appliances from Being Fried during a Power Outage

Spring showers, summer thunderstorms, adverse winter weather, utility company repairs, faulty wiring, wondering animals – what do they all have in common aside from simple inconveniences to our every day lives? They can all lead to power outages or worse - power surges, which can result in thousands of dollars in the damages for consumers. If you're having a difficult time believing that such an event can occur in your life, just ask the residents of the Fairlawn community in Wards 7 and 8. In June 2007, they experienced power outages and eventually power surges when the outages were restored causing thousands of dollars in damages to their electrical appliances and devices.

Power surges occur when an unexpected amount of electrical voltage is transmitted through a power line, resulting in either a blink or longer outage. Since the Fairlawn community outages and subsequent power surges, the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC) has received several inquiries from consumers concerned about how to protect their appliances from power surge damage. As the advocate for District of Columbia electrical consumers, OPC is offering utility ratepayers – *Helpful Tips to Protect your Appliances from Being Fried!*

- The most inexpensive way to protect electrical appliances and equipment is for consumers to purchase a power strip with a surge protector. Usually priced from \$20 to \$100 (depending on its power capability), surge protectors can be used for power surges that originate inside the home.¹
- Consumers with home offices or a large amount of electrical equipment might want to invest in an uninterruptible power supply (UPS), which ranges from \$100 to \$1000. A UPS is similar to a surge protector, but it has built in battery packs that supply electricity to equipment for several minutes after a power outage.
- Meter-based surge protectors while more expensive than the previous prevention devices, will offer your home the ultimate protection from power surges. The meter-based surge protector protects your entire home from large external surges.

It is important for consumers to take a proactive approach to protecting their home electronics from power surges. A small upfront investment in the proper equipment can save you a huge headache and thousands of dollars in lost electronics.

¹ Alliant Energy, <http://www.alliantenergy.com/docs/groups/public/documents/pub/p014668.hcsp>.