

# After Hours Macintosh Consulting

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## Surge Protection

With the chronic power problems in today's office and home environment, you may want to consider a quality power surge protector. Generally, the strips available at your local discount or electronics store don't offer a warranty on the products connected to them, nor are they sufficient to protect a computer from a surge, even the gentle ones occasionally generated by your utility company. It takes little more than a voltage spike of 140V AC to fry a motherboard. We strongly urge you at the very least to install surge protection that offers a warranty for the machines protected. Yes, they cost more -- but they give more.

Surge protection only really protects you from what the power company can do to your line voltage. A nearby lightning strike can generate a strong enough spike to literally jump across an on-off switch and fry your components. Even if the surge protector is turned off, the equipment can be toasted. Look closely at the warranty. If your site is prone to brown outs or power blackouts, you may want to consider an uninterruptable power supply (UPS). Large UPS systems can keep you up and running for hours after power loss. Ideally, you need just a few minutes of backup time to save your work and shut down properly. An additional benefit of a UPS system is that it depends upon the equivalent of a car battery for backup power. Should a lightning strike or a catastrophic utility snafu occur, the battery sucks up the spike, protecting the downstream equipment. Nothing is perfect, but this is close. Typically, a UPS should offer a guarantee covering the cost of the equipment protected (say \$10,000 to \$25,000).

One more thought about power protection. Any modem connections that rely upon existing phone lines should also use surge protectors. This is a common "back-door" for lethal power surges, blowing both the modem and the computer to which it is attached. Fax, specialty phones and answering machines are similarly at risk. Most quality surge/UPS devices include modem protection. Note that most laserprinters (and copiers) draw excessive power, so small UPS units are unsuited for protecting these printers. Use a quality surge strip for these devices.

For more information, please feel free to call us at 919-271-7479