

RENTALS & LOADSHEDDING

Power Surges & Potential for Fires

presented by

ShaunLuyt

Your Partner in the "Business" of Residential Property Rentals



What is a Power Surge & How Can it Cause a Fire?

What is a Power Surge

Source: <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/opinion/letter-can-the-power-surge-after-load-shedding-cause-a-fire-256cf255-81d4-4432-bea2-1e2cee7b2b53>

- **Power surges** entail the **oversupply of a voltage** which generally last a fraction of a second and, if severe, will generally damage digital and computer equipment, which possibly could start a fire.
- Power surges generally happen in one of two ways:
 - During the necessary **switching of the electricity grid**: For instance, **after load shedding**, but these last for **milli-seconds** and are **unlikely to generate enough heat to cause a fire**. These surges **can**, however, **be dangerous for sensitive electronic appliances** and hence the advice to customers to switch off their electronic appliances during load shedding.
 - If **lightning strikes** a power line: The lightning uses it as conduit and this has **been known to make equipment explode**, which **could start a fire**. This is generally in Gauteng and inland and the use of surge arrestors are widely used there as mitigation.

Examples in the News

CapeTownEtc article (2019)

House fires allegedly sparked by load shedding concerns locals



<https://www.capetownetc.com/news/house-fires-allegedly-sparked-by-load-shedding-concerns-locals/>

CapeTownEtc article (2019)

- some locals have reported that their homes burned to the ground, allegedly as a result of load shedding
- “Apparently, 11 houses have burnt down in CT in the past week due to the same problem . . . ”
- “The fire chief advised me that the only way to prevent these tragedies is to switch the main switch off on the dv board when load shedding happens, and wait until power is back on before switching it back on. I thought it important to share this information.”

Risk & Avoidance

Avoidance

- “switch the main switch off on the dv board when load shedding happens, and wait until power is back on before switching it back on.” – Fire Chief ??
((according to quote in CapeTownEtc article)
- Fire and Rescue spokesperson Jermaine Carelse (quoted in same article):
 - “What I do is check the load shedding schedule and
 - **switch the mains off and all the plugs on the Distribution Board at least 10 minutes before the power is scheduled to go off.**
 - I have **multi plugs all with surge protectors**, and this **prevents appliances from perhaps breaking as a result of the sudden surge of electricity.**
 - After the power has been restored,
 - I **first switch on the mains and then the plugs** in the house also
 - **all plugs in the house must be switched off.**
 - It may seem a tedious operation but prevention beats a cure I say.”

Avoidance

Phindile Maxiti, Mayco Member for Energy and Climate Change:

Source: <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/opinion/letter-can-the-power-surge-after-load-shedding-cause-a-fire-256cf255-81d4-4432-bea2-1e2cee7b2b53>

- An increase in **fires during load shedding**, however, is **mostly associated with pressing irons, cookers, heaters etc.** that were in use shortly before load shedding and are **inadvertently left “on”** during load-shedding.
- After load shedding has ended and **supply is restored**, these **appliances are likely unattended** because the customer has fallen asleep, has moved away or simply forgotten that these appliances are “on” and could easily **start a fire** if left under these circumstances for long enough in close proximity to combustible materials.

Surge Protection

- Source: <https://www.sunburstelectric.co.za/loadshedding-101-surge-protection-matters/>
- **Surge protectors** are designed to equalize voltage spikes to
- **decrease the damage caused by power surges.**
- Surge protectors are **effective in preventing damage resulting from most surges**
- **there will always be exceptions to the rule** (though thankfully they tend to be few and far between).
- To prevent every surge from being a catastrophe, we strongly recommend installing surge protection
- **Whole-house surge protection** is reportedly the best way to protect your electronics and bigger electrical systems.
- **more expensive than plug-in surge protectors**, but
- it reportedly provides much more protection.
- They're a lot more effective against external power sources (such as lightning strikes, or surges resulting from the power returning after loadshedding).
- This type of surge protection is **installed at the fuse box**, stopping the surge before it even makes its way inside

RHA, Lease & Regulations

TPN Lease

Insurance

Landlord Insurance

- Check insurance covers the eventuality of power surge fire
- Cover to replace property
- INCLUDING fixtures & fittings
- Where there is BC insurance LL's should consider some form of top-up cover to cover decent finishes
- BC insurance covers is often not adequate
- Loss of rent???

Tenant Insurance

- Insure they have cover for this eventuality
 - Replacement of appliances possibly
 - Replacement of contents in the worst case scenario
 - Cover for alternative accommodation????

Grant Rea

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