

*They say that lightning never strikes twice in the same place. But are you willing to bet thousands of dollars of equipment on that? After the Birmingham Public Library experienced two separate power surges that blew out the equipment at the same location, protection became a top priority.*

## Lightning Strikes Twice

Sometimes people think they need to protect equipment against the possibility of a one-time disaster. The Birmingham Public Library learned that damaging power surges are not just bad luck or once-in-a-lifetime disasters — they are very real dangers produced by thunderstorm activity and a variety of other causes that are continually present in the environment inside and outside any building.

The Birmingham Public Library information system is a very large operation, with 40 remote locations connected to its network. Previously, the library had not focused on protection and was simply using a selection of inexpensive UPSs and line conditions which did not provide an adequate defense against the dangers of poor quality power.

Several times, harmful electrical disturbances came through electrical and phone lines, totally destroying the equipment at some of the library's remote locations. Of course, it cost time and money to replace the equipment, but it wasn't until lightning struck twice at the same location that the Birmingham Public Library realized the importance of protection.

One particular library facility was hit by a power surge two times, probably caused by lightning in the area. A terminal server and an ethernet bridge ISDN line were destroyed, costing the library approximately \$2000 each time. With the realization that lightning can strike twice, comes a more immediate desire for complete protection. "We had to replace the equipment both times. That's why I had to find some-

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*Phil Teague, Automation Services Coordinator, Birmingham Public Library*

one who knew how to deal with this sort of problem," explained Phil Teague, Automation Services Coordinator for the Birmingham Public Library.

"We wanted to avoid losing anymore expensive equipment," Teague continued. "These surges were starting to add significant costs to the library because they cause such a high level of damage. The terminal server, for example, the most expensive part of the system,

was not repairable after the surge. It was more than just blowing a fuse — the equipment was beyond recovery, permanently inoperable. And it's not covered under the warranty because the surge is considered a natural disaster. What they are telling you is that you should be protecting it with equipment from someone like ONEAC."

It was possible that this location would never get hit again, but the problem had to be addressed. The library needed assurance that its equipment would be safe. After talking to specialists at ONEAC, the Birmingham Public Library installed an On Series UPS, a Power Conditioner, and On Line Communication Line Protectors at the site.

Sometime after all the equipment was installed, the same location experienced a third power surge. "A television set and terminal and several other pieces of equipment were destroyed by the surge, but the information systems equipment protected by ONEAC was saved," said Phil Teague. "After the second power surge, I know we needed to address the problem. But now, after the third one, I am thoroughly convinced that the ONEAC equipment is vital to the protection of the system."

"Seeing how often it can happen to the same location has given us a new perspective," Phil Teague concluded. "We are now looking at protecting our 39 other sites with similar ONEAC equipment."

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