

Maintenance

Most SPDs have an indication window to show the user that they are providing protection. If this window displays a red flag then they have reached “end of life” and will need replacing. Often there is a replaceable cartridge which can simply be withdrawn and replaced with a new operational device.



Hager Ltd.

Unit M2
Furry Park Industrial Estate
Swords Road
Santry
Dublin D09 NY19
Ireland

Tel: 0818 551502

Fax: 0818 551503

Technical Support: +353 1 5180844

Technical Whatsapp: +353 87 1873759

hager.ie

customer.service@hager.ie

technical.service@hager.ie



@HagerIreland



@hagerireland



Hager Ireland

Surge Protection Devices



At a Glance

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Surges & The Dangers

The whole nature of how electrical equipment is used in homes and at work has evolved; with everyday activities relying on electronic equipment.

Products such as computers, printers, flat screen televisions, industrial control equipment such as PLC's, alarms, microwaves and washing machines are common place. These can all be vulnerable to **transient overvoltages**, which can significantly reduce the equipment's lifespan through degradation and damage.

A transient overvoltage or surge is a short duration increase in voltage measured between two or more conductors. In short this means anything from microseconds (millionths of a second) to a few milliseconds (thousandths of a second) in duration.



Surge Protection Devices

SPD's protect electrical and electronic equipment against transients, originating from lightning, switching of transformers, lighting and motors. These transients can cause premature ageing of equipment, downtime, or complete destruction of electronic components and materials. SPDs are strongly recommended for installations that are exposed to transients, to protect sensitive and expensive electrical equipment such as TVs, washing machines, PCs, alarms etc.

Choice

The choice of SPD depends on a number of criteria such as:

- The risk of lightning strikes
- The exposure of the building to transients.
- The sensitivity and value of the electrical equipment that requires protection.
- Earthing system
- Level of protection

Selection Criteria

Surge protection devices are classified according to their functions:

Type 1

SPD which can discharge partial lightning current with a typical waveform 10/350 μ s. Usually employs spark gap technology.

Type 2

SPD which can prevent the spread of overvoltages in the electrical installations and protects equipment connected to it. It usually employs metal oxide varistor (MOV) technology and is characterised by an 8/20 μ s current wave.

Type 3

These SPDs have a low discharge capacity. They must therefore only be installed as a supplement to Type 2 SPD and in the vicinity of sensitive loads. Type 3 SPD's are characterised by a combination of voltage waves (1.2/50 μ s) and current waves (8/20 μ s).

Terminology

I_{imp} – Impulse current of 10/350 μ s waveform associated with Type 1 SPD's

I_n – Surge current of 8/20 μ s waveform associated with Type 2 SPD's

U_p – The residual voltage that is measured across the terminal of the SPD when I_n is applied

U_c – The maximum voltage which may be continuously applied to the SPD without it conducting.