

The River Cities  
**DAILY TRIBUNE**

‘Living In a Tech World’ Column

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## **10 Ways to Muck-up Your Tech World: #1 – Plug Your Computer Equipment into a Wall Socket**

Over the next ten weeks, I’m going to pass on ten of the best ways I know to create chaos, if not loss, in your tech world. It may not happen immediately but eventually something bad will happen if you follow these suggestions.

### **#1 – Plug your computer, monitor and printers directly into a wall socket**

You will be following the example of millions of computer users. Plug it right in and sit back and wait for a power surge to come across your power lines. We usually wait for a thunderstorm to bring on a surge but any power interruption can cause a component frying event. It could be an appliance, something as small as a hairdryer or as large as an air conditioner. A tree falling across a power line and everyday electric utility company maintenance can produce damaging electrical surges. The surge will occur when the electricity comes back on. But if you would rather pass on this suggestion and wait for a more creative way to destroy your computer or its data here are some tips.

### **Preventing a shocking situation**

Basically there are two ways to prevent the loss or damage to your equipment, a surge protector/power strip or an uninterruptable power supply. Both are designed to protect your equipment but you need to have the right one for your setup.

### **Power Strip Surge Protectors**

Surge protectors act like an electrical sponge, absorbing dangerous excess voltage and preventing most of it from reaching your sensitive equipment. Like a sponge, surge protectors have a limited capacity to absorb. Here are five things to look for in a surge protector.

UL 1449 clamping voltage —The lower the rating, the better the protection. The lowest UL rating for clamping voltage is 330 volts.

3-Line protection — Surges can occur between hot, neutral and ground lines. Choose a unit that protects along all three lines.

Circuit breaker — A breaker stops the flow of electricity when a circuit is overloaded and is not related to surges or spikes.

Response time — How fast a surge protector can react. The faster the better.

(more)

Joule rating — The joule rating on a surge protector indicates the amount of energy that a device is capable of absorbing. In general, the higher the joule rating, the better the unit is able to protect your equipment and the longer it will last.

You may also look for a strip that has a telephone connection, coax/ TV cable connection as those devices can carry electricity as well.

### **Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS)**

This is surge protector on steroids. It not only performs the protection role it has a built in battery that allows you to carry on your computing chores long enough to get an orderly exit from what you were working on. It also will smooth out noisy power sources. Upgraded models have a plethora of other power management tools.

Each UPS has multiple plugs for your devices. But typically, especially on less expensive models not all of the plugs also give you battery backup. So you may be able to plug 6 devices into your UPS but only two will have battery backup. Another selection criteria is the VA rating. This is the maximum number of Volts times Amps it can deliver. The VA rating is not the same as the power drain (in Watts) of the equipment. Figure on 450 VA for a typical desktop computer setup. For a single machine plus small associated networking equipment (for example, a DSL/Cable modem/router, wireless access point, etc.), buying a 600 VA UPS is often pretty reasonable. Buying a bigger UPS with a higher VA rating will allow you to protect more equipment going forward. You should do your own calculation for equipment because it varies widely.

Like all things in our tech world the technology behind these devices is changing rapidly. Some new devices have autoswitching that can turn your devices on/off saving you power. Both surge protectors and UPS's have this feature on some models. If you aren't looking for an excuse to buy a new computer, the only reason I can think of for following the advice at the top of the column, you should expect to pay \$20 - \$50 for a good surge protector and \$60 to \$600 for a UPS. For links to good online places to buy this equipment check my website ( <http://vccdigital.com/columns.html>)

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