



An Extended Guide · No. 1747

Protecting Your TV and Home Theater

Guarding the screen, the
sound, and the cable line

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — two kinds of protection, one safety rule

There are two kinds of surge protection in this guide, and they are not the same job. A whole-home surge protector wires into your electrical panel, where the power is always live and a mistake can be deadly — that is strictly a licensed electrician's work, almost always with a permit, and never a do-it-yourself project. (It isn't something I do myself, either; I help you understand it, choose wisely, and line up a trustworthy local pro.) The other kind — the surge-protector strips and plug-in units you use at the wall — are perfectly safe for you to set up on your own. One honest note either way: no surge protector is a lightning rod or an iron-clad guarantee, so in a violent electrical storm, unplugging a treasured device is still the surest protection of all. For your television and home theater, nearly all of the work is the easy, plug-in kind you can do yourself — and the one thing folks forget is that a surge can ride in on the cable line, not just the power cord.

Let's protect your favorite spot in the house

The TV corner is where a lot of living happens — the ballgame, the movie night, the evening news. Let's make sure a stray jolt of electricity never spoils it, in plain English and with no fuss.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech over in Portage County. A big part of what I do is set up folks' televisions and sound systems so they just work — and so a storm or a hiccup in the power doesn't cost you a pricey television down the road.

Here's the whole idea in a nutshell: a home theater has two ways for a surge to sneak in, the power cord and the cable line, and guarding both is simple and inexpensive. This guide walks you through it one easy step at a time, and you don't have to memorize a thing.

★ Ask me anything, anytime

If any part of this feels fuzzy, that's perfectly normal — it's just new. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll walk you through it as many times as you like, with nothing to sell you.

The whole guide, on one page

If you only take away these few things, your home theater is already in far better shape than most.

- ❑ A television and its boxes are delicate electronics — exactly the sort of thing a surge can ruin.
- ❑ Guard two paths, not one: the power cord AND the cable (coax) line, because surges travel both.
- ❑ Use a real surge protector — one that says so and has an indicator light — not a plain power strip.
- ❑ For a box that reboots on every little blink, like a cable or streaming box, a small battery backup (a UPS) is a nice touch.
- ❑ Set the protector where you can reach the switch and see the green light without crawling behind the cabinet.
- ❑ In a violent storm, the surest move is still to unplug the set — power cord and cable line both.

✓ One picture to hold onto

Think of it like locking up at night. The power cord is the front door and the cable line is the side door. Lock only one and you've left the other wide open.

What's in your setup, and what's really at risk

Not every piece is equally fragile. Knowing which ones are tells you where a little protection pays off most.

Modern televisions, receivers, soundbars, streaming and recording boxes, and game consoles are all packed with delicate computer chips. That's what makes them wonderful — and what makes a sudden voltage spike able to harm them in an instant, or quietly shorten their lives over time.

How much risk	What's in this group
Most at risk	TV, receiver, DVR, console
Also at risk	Streaming box, soundbar
Shrugs it off	A plain lamp on the shelf

✓ **The pricey part is the brains**

It isn't the screen glass that a surge hurts — it's the little circuit boards inside. That's why even a slim streaming stick deserves the same care as the big television it plugs into.

The two doors a surge walks through

This is the single most important idea in the guide, so let me say it plainly.

Everyone thinks about the power cord, and rightly so — that's one door a surge can come through. But there's a second door people forget: the **cable line**, the round screw-on wire (called coax) that brings in your cable TV or internet.

A nearby lightning strike, or trouble out on the lines, can send a surge riding right down that cable and straight into your television or cable box — completely bypassing even the best power-cord protector. Guard one door and leave the other open, and you're only half-protected.

! Both doors, or neither is enough

The fix is easy: use a surge protector that has coax jacks so the cable line runs through it too, or, in a severe storm, unplug the cable line along with the power. We'll cover both in the next few pages.

Start with the power cord

The first door is the easy one, and it's the part you can do yourself this afternoon.

Use a real surge protector

A plain power strip only splits one outlet into several — it offers no protection at all. A real surge protector looks similar but has protective parts inside. Tell them apart by the label and the little indicator light: if it doesn't clearly say 'surge protector,' assume it's just a strip.

- ☐ Look for the words 'surge protector' right on the unit or its box.
- ☐ Look for an indicator light — ideally one for 'protected' and one for 'grounded.'
- ☐ Look for enough well-spaced outlets for those chunky power blocks.
- ☐ Look for a UL-listed safety mark, the sign it met a recognized safety standard.

✓ Match the protector to the job

Your television and its gear are the sensitive, expensive kind, so they deserve a good protector — not the cheapest strip on the shelf. Our guide on choosing a protector goes deeper if you'd like it.

Now guard the cable line

This is the door most folks miss — and it's just as easy to close.

Many good surge protectors made for a TV have a pair of coax jacks on the back, marked something like 'in' and 'out.' You run the incoming cable into the protector, then a short cable from the protector on to your television or cable box. Now the cable line is guarded, right alongside the power.

- If your protector has coax jacks, route the cable line through them — in from the wall, out to the TV.
- Some protectors also have jacks for a phone line or a network (ethernet) cable; use them if those lines reach your gear.
- No coax jacks on your protector? That's fine — just plan to unplug the cable line by hand in a bad storm.

! A screwed-on cable can carry a surge

That cable line is not just a signal — a nearby strike can push a real jolt down it. Guarding it, or unplugging it, is every bit as important as the power cord. Don't skip this door.

A small battery backup for boxes that hate a blink

Ever have the power flicker for half a second and then spend ten minutes waiting for the cable box to reboot? Here's the cure.

A UPS — short for uninterruptible power supply — is simply a surge protector with a battery built in. When the power blinks or dips, the battery carries your device right through it, so the box never notices and never has to restart. Most of these units include surge protection too, so you get both jobs in one.

For a home theater, a small UPS shines on the boxes that reboot at every hiccup — a cable box, a recording (DVR) box, or a streaming box in the middle of your show. The television itself usually doesn't need one; it's the fussy little boxes that benefit most.

✓ It's a comfort, not a must

A UPS on the DVR is a lovely convenience, not a requirement. If blinks aren't a bother where you live, a good surge protector alone is plenty. Our battery-backup guide covers UPS units in full.

Set it where you can see it and reach it

A protector only helps if you can actually use it and read it — so let's place it with your comfort in mind.

- ❑ Put the protector where you can reach its on/off switch without moving the whole cabinet.
- ❑ Keep the indicator light in view, so a quick glance tells you it's still protecting.
- ❑ Plug it straight into the wall outlet — never into an extension cord or another strip.
- ❑ Leave a little slack in the cords so nothing is pulled tight or strained.
- ❑ If bending down is hard on you, mount or rest the protector up where it's easy to see and switch.

★ I'll set it up so it's easy on you

On a visit I'll place everything so you never have to crawl behind the television, and I'll show you exactly which light to glance at. That's the kind of small thing that makes a big difference. Call (330) 200-8042.

A few wiring do's and don'ts

These simple habits keep your setup both safe and truly protected. None of them cost a penny.

- **Do** plug the protector directly into a properly grounded three-prong wall outlet.
- **Don't** daisy-chain — that is, never plug one power strip or protector into another one.
- **Don't** force a three-prong plug into an old two-prong outlet with a 'cheater' adapter; it defeats the protection.
- **Do** label the cords so you know at a glance which plug is the TV, which is the DVR, and so on.
- **Do** keep cords tidy and off walkways, so nobody trips and nothing gets yanked loose.

! Daisy-chaining is a real hazard

Plugging strips into strips can overload them and start a fire, and it undoes the surge protection besides. If you're short on outlets, that's a sign to have an electrician add one — not to chain another strip.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Where you live changes how hard a storm is on your home theater — and a farmhouse on a well faces a different picture than a tidy lot in town.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, the lines feeding your home are often shorter, and sometimes buried, so nearby lightning has fewer places to jump aboard. Your outages tend to be shorter, and your cable line usually comes from a nearby box down the street.

- A good surge protector with coax jacks on the TV and its boxes covers most of what matters.
- A small battery backup on the cable or streaming box smooths out those brief blinks that are common in town.
- You'll still get everyday spikes from your own furnace and fridge, so keep the protectors in place year-round.
- A whole-home protector at the panel is still a fine, affordable backstop — an electrician's job.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, long overhead lines run for miles, giving lightning far more chances to put a surge on your power and cable lines. Storms roll through with little in the way, and outages tend to run longer.

- That extra exposure makes guarding the cable line, not just the power, especially worth doing.
- Longer, more frequent outages make a battery backup on the boxes you watch most a genuine comfort.
- A whole-home protector at the panel is an especially smart first layer out here — have a licensed electrician handle it, with a permit.
- In a serious storm, unplugging the television and its cable line by hand is still the surest step of all.

★ Not sure which picture is yours?

Plenty of homes land somewhere in between. Tell me where you are and how your power behaves in a storm, and I'll help you sort out what's worth doing — no pressure, ever. Call (330) 200-8042.

In a severe storm, unplug the treasures

No plug-in protector is a lightning rod. When a violent storm is right overhead, unplugging is still the surest protection there is.

A big surge protector greatly reduces the risk from everyday spikes and nearby strikes, and that's most of the battle. But a direct hit is simply too much for any plug-in device. On the nights the sky turns genuinely nasty, a two-minute habit beats any gadget.

- ❑ Unplug the television's power cord from the wall or the protector.
- ❑ Unplug the cable (coax) line too — remember, that's the second door.
- ❑ Do the same for anything else you'd hate to lose, like a game console.
- ❑ Wait until the storm has passed, then plug everything back in.

! Keep yourself safe first

During the worst of a storm, stay away from wired devices and plumbing, and don't fuss with cords if there's lightning right on top of you. A television can be replaced; take care of yourself first.

Surge protectors wear out — watch the light

Here's the catch that fools almost everyone, so it's worth knowing before it fools you.

A surge protector is sacrificial — its protective parts wear down a little with every surge and with age, until one day they can't protect anymore. The sneaky part is that a worn-out protector **still powers your television**. The outlets still work, so folks keep trusting protection that's long gone.

That's what the indicator light is for. If the 'protected' light is out while the strip still has power, the protection is used up — replace the unit, even though everything still turns on. Replace it too after a known big surge or a close lightning strike, and as a matter of course every few years.

✓ When in doubt, replace it

A surge protector is the cheap part of the whole setup, and your television is the expensive part. If you're ever unsure whether a protector still has life in it, just swap in a fresh one — cheap insurance.

Soundbars, receivers, and the rest of the rack

The sound side of your setup deserves the same care as the picture side — and it's easy to fold right in.

A soundbar or an audio-video receiver is full of the same delicate electronics as the television, so plug it into the same good surge protector. If your receiver is the hub that everything else connects through, it's an especially good thing to keep guarded.

- Plug the soundbar or receiver into the same surge protector as the TV, with room to spare for those bulky plugs.
- Powered speakers with their own cords count too — give them a protected outlet.
- Old, simple speakers with no power cord of their own don't need anything; they carry no risk.

✓ One protector can serve the whole stand

For most setups, a single good surge protector with enough outlets can cover the television, the sound, and the boxes all at once. No need for a tangle of separate strips — and remember, never chain one into another.

Streaming sticks, DVRs, and game consoles

The little boxes are easy to overlook, so here's a quick rundown of each.

- **Streaming stick or box:** plug it into the surge protector like anything else. It rides on your Wi-Fi, so there's usually no cable line to guard on it directly.
- **Cable box or DVR:** guard the power and the coax line, and consider a small battery backup so a blink doesn't force a slow reboot — or, on a DVR, interrupt a recording.
- **Game console:** a real gaming machine is a computer at heart — a good surge protector is well worth it, and a battery backup spares you a hard crash in a blink. Our computer-and-network guide covers that side of things too.

✓ Guarding a recording

If you record shows on a DVR, a brief power blink can spoil a recording or restart the box mid-program. That's the very situation a small battery backup was made for.

Wall-mounted TVs and tidy, safe cords

A television up on the wall looks wonderful, but it asks for a little extra thought about where the protection lives.

With a wall-mounted set, the surge protector usually sits below, near the outlet or on the shelf with the boxes. Run the television's power and cable down to it neatly, and keep that indicator light somewhere you can still glance at without a ladder.

Whatever you do, resist the urge to hide a protector somewhere you can never reach or see it. If the light is buried behind the cabinet, you'll never notice when it's time to replace the unit — and that defeats the whole purpose.

✓ Cord covers keep it neat

Simple cord covers or channels tidy the wires from a wall-mounted TV and keep them from being tugged or tripped over. I'm happy to set this up so it looks clean and stays safe.

A simple shopping checklist

Take this list to the store, or keep it by the computer when you shop online. It's all you really need.

- ☐ It plainly says 'surge protector' — not just 'power strip.'
- ☐ It has an indicator light, ideally both 'protected' and 'grounded.'
- ☐ It has coax jacks if you want to guard the cable line through it.
- ☐ It has enough well-spaced outlets for the TV, the sound, and the boxes.
- ☐ It carries a UL-listed safety mark.
- ☐ A warranty is a nice bonus — but the protection itself matters more than the guarantee.

✓ Don't chase a single number

You'll see 'joule' ratings on the box — a rough measure of how much a protector can soak up over its life, where higher generally lasts longer. It's worth a glance, but don't obsess over one figure. Our choosing guide explains it in plain terms.

Common mistakes people make

Knowing the usual slip-ups ahead of time is half the battle. Here are the ones I see most around the TV.

- **Trusting a plain power strip** to protect a television — it only adds outlets, nothing more.
- **Guarding the power but forgetting the cable line** — leaving that second door wide open.
- **Hiding the protector** where the light can never be seen, so a worn-out unit goes unnoticed for years.
- **Daisy-chaining strips** behind the cabinet when there aren't enough outlets.
- **Keeping a protector forever** and assuming that because the TV still turns on, the protection is fine.

! The forgotten cable line

If I had to name the one mistake I see most with home theaters, it's guarding the power cord and leaving the cable line unprotected. Please don't let that be you — close both doors.

A few myths, cleared up

The TV corner attracts some tall tales. Here are the ones I hear most, set straight.

- **'My power strip protects the TV.'** No — a plain strip just adds outlets. You need a real surge protector.
- **'Only the power cord matters.'** No — the cable line is a second way in, and it needs guarding too.
- **'A surge protector keeps my show on during an outage.'** No — that's a battery backup's job. A protector stops spikes, not outages.
- **'Surge protectors last forever.'** No — they wear out, and the light is how you know.
- **'A newer TV doesn't need protection.'** Backwards — newer sets have more delicate electronics, so they need it more.

✓ There's a whole guide on the myths

If any of these surprised you, good — that's the point. Our 'common myths' guide and the 'protector versus power strip' guide dig into each one in friendly detail.

Where to begin, without overthinking it

You don't have to do everything at once. Here's a calm order that fits most homes.

First, put a good surge protector on the television and its boxes, and run the cable line through it if it has coax jacks. That single step closes both doors and covers most of the risk — and you can do it this week.

Then, if brief blinks bother you, add a small battery backup to the cable, DVR, or streaming box. And when you're ready, ask a licensed electrician about a whole-home protector at the panel, which quietly backs up everything. There's no rush; one good layer beats none.

★ A plan that fits your budget

There's no need to spend it all at once. Tell me your setup and what you'd hate to lose, and I'll help you put it in a sensible order — starting with the easy, inexpensive wins. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

How I can help

Setting up a television and its protection is exactly the sort of everyday job I love to take off your plate.

I'll come to your home, set up the right surge protector on your TV and sound system, run the cable line through it, and add a small battery backup if the boxes need one. I'll manage the cords so nothing's a trip hazard, and show you which light to glance at so you'll always know your protection is still on the job.

If a whole-home protector at the panel makes sense for you, I don't do that electrical work myself — that's a licensed electrician's job. But I'll help you understand it and line up a trustworthy local pro, so you're never sorting that out alone.

★ Real help, close to home

A first in-home visit is a flat \$99, and for the simple things I can often help over the phone or a screen-share for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about protecting a television and home theater, answered plainly.

Q: Do I really need to protect the cable line too?

Yes — it's the door most folks miss. A surge can ride down the coax cable and into your TV, right past a power-only protector. Run the cable through a protector with coax jacks, or unplug it in a bad storm.

Q: Does my television need a battery backup?

Usually not — a good surge protector is enough for the TV itself. A small battery backup shines on the boxes that reboot at every blink, like a cable box, a DVR, or a streaming box.

Q: Can one surge protector cover the whole stand?

Often, yes. A single good protector with enough well-spaced outlets can handle the TV, the sound, and the boxes together. Just never plug one strip into another to gain more outlets.

Q: How do I know if my protector still works?

Glance at its indicator light. If the 'protected' light is out while the strip still has power, the protection is used up — replace the unit, even though your TV still turns on.

Q: Is a fancier, pricier protector always better?

Not necessarily. Look for the right features — the words 'surge protector,' an indicator light, coax jacks, and a UL-listed mark — rather than chasing the highest number or the biggest price.

Q: What should I do the moment a big storm hits?

If you can do it safely and there isn't lightning right overhead, unplug the television's power cord and its cable line, plus anything else you treasure. Plug back in once the storm has passed.

★ Still have a question?

That's what I'm here for. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and ask away — there's truly no such thing as a silly question.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made protecting your TV and home theater feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

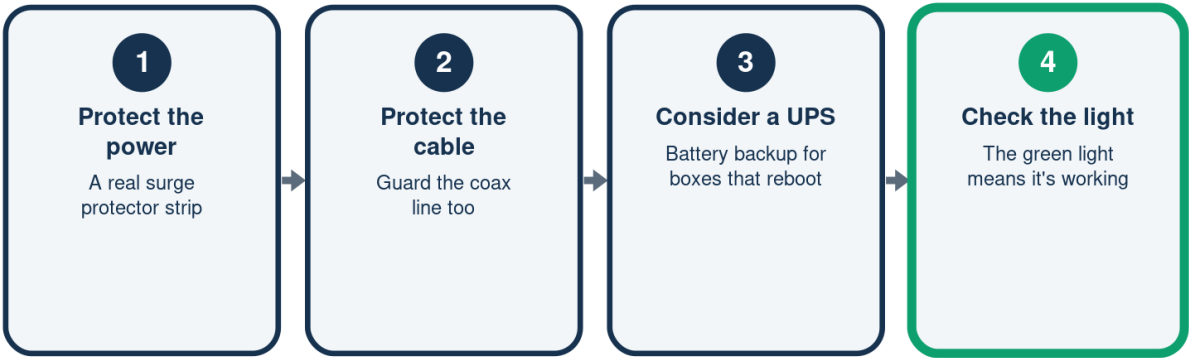
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★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Protecting the Whole Setup

Guard it in a few plain steps



Two doors to guard – the power cord and the cable line.

What Each Piece Needs

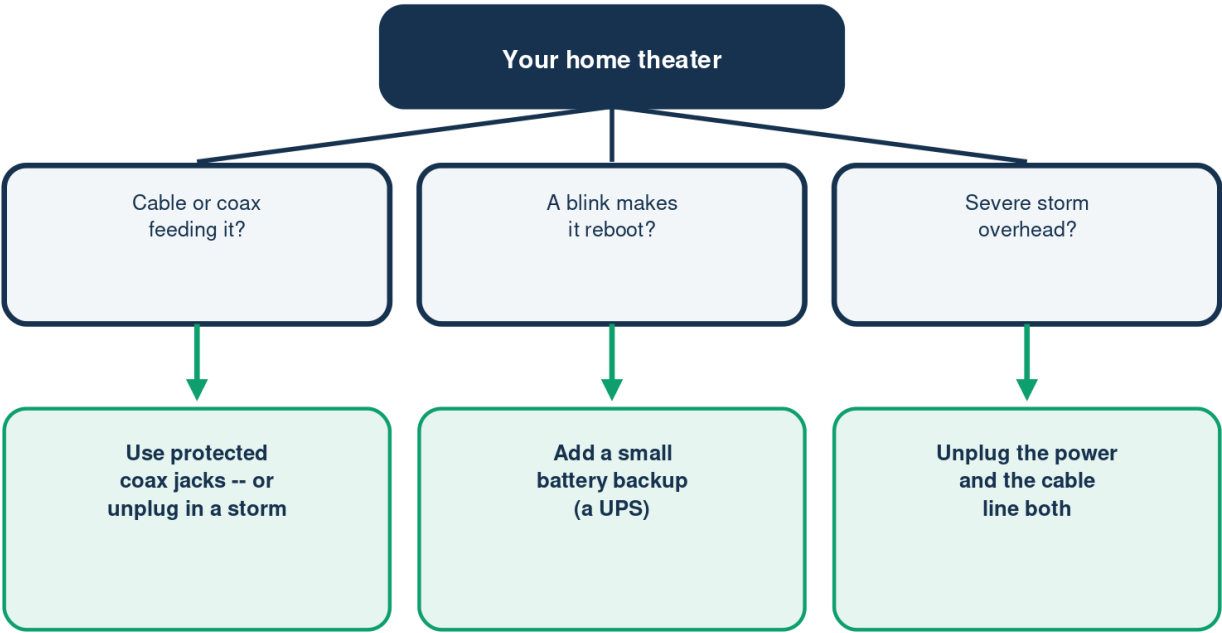
A quick guide, item by item

How to guard it	
TV	A surge protector
Cable box / DVR	Surge and a UPS
Streaming stick	A surge protector
Game console	A surge protector

Guard the cable line too wherever coax feeds a device.

What Does Your Home Theater Need?

Let your setup point the way



No plug-in device fully survives a direct strike -- unplug in a bad storm.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

Surge Protector or Battery Backup?

They do different jobs -- you may want both

	Surge protector	UPS
Stops spikes	Yes	Yes
Rides out a blink	No	Yes
Best for	The TV	The DVR box

Most battery backups include surge protection built in.



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Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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