

The Pendulum

# Lightning problems investigated in Provence apartments

Mark Mizell  
Reporter

A powerful lightning storm affected Provence apartments causing a power outage.

As well as damage to student's appliances and electronics. The storm sent one student to the hospital after being electrocuted inside her apartment.

On Sept. 20 a major storm laid down approximately a third of an inch of rain. The new apartment complex, which cost about \$3 million to complete and was finished this summer, had at least one strike of lightning in close proximity to the complex.

There was no evidence of a lightning strike on the property, but it must have struck close for there to be such a scenario.

Several students experienced fried appliances and electronics in the apartment

"The surge went through our power lines and through individual outlets," Tim Taylor said. "My computer's motherboard got so fried that I have to replace it."

Junior Julie Ougheltree had another story. "It was raining all of a sudden and a huge flash of white light came through the window, the TV went fuzzy and our fire alarm went off," Ougheltree said. "Five minutes

later the same thing happened, but this time our cable and Internet went out also."

"Thankfully, my roommates and I were not hurt, nor did we have any serious damage," explained sophomore Jen Cobb. "We are having trouble with two of the three TVs in our apartment. They still work, but the color and screens of the televisions are different now."

Junior Katie Sauer decided to drive to the hospital Tuesday evening after experiencing pains in her arm and shoulder as a result of the electrocution that she received while she was still in her home.

"The pain was starting to move up my arm into my shoulder, so I thought maybe I should ask my friends to drive me to the hospital," Sauer said. "When I got there, they did some blood work, gave me an E.K.G, and all of the tests came back fine. The doctors just told me to soak my arm because it was starting to swell, and they gave me some medicine."

She became electrocuted after hearing a loud clap of lightning and the lights went out. Their computers were also not working.

"We went to the fuse box, and I kind of had my hand on it," Sauer said. "We heard another loud bang, then a zapping sound again, sparks came out of the box, and that's when I

got electrocuted. Everyone kind of jumped back, really stunned, and when we looked at the fuse box again, it had sparks jumping from it."

When the owner and superintendent of the complex, Darrell Gauthier, was contacted for further information on the matter, he advised that the story be held until a more thorough investigation could be completed. However, when he was contacted a week later, he did not return phone calls.

Valerie Patterson, the public affairs manager of Duke Power, however, was contacted by Gauthier soon after the incident.

"We are looking into how our equipment can be changed or modified to make things safer for our customer," Patterson said. "Our service technicians have gone out, checked our facilities, but did not find any problem with our equipment."

During the Duke Power investigation, evidence of a lightning strike to a pine tree located between two buildings on the property at 807 E. Haggard was also discovered.

The power company is continuing to cooperate and work with the customers until a solution is found.

Contact Mark Mizell at [pendulum@elon.edu](mailto:pendulum@elon.edu) or 278-7247.

## Lightning safety tips for inside the home

### Avoid:

— contact with corded phones.

— contact with electrical equipment or cords. If you plan to unplug any electronic equipment, do so well before the storm arrives.

— contact with plumbing. Do not wash your hands, do not take a shower, do not wash dishes, and do not do laundry.

— windows and doors, and stay off porches.

— lying on concrete floors and do not lean against concrete walls.

— Courtesy of the National Weather Service



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