FMBusinessDaily

Heatwave Today, Storms Tomorrow: Is Your Building Ready?

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PTSG is one of the UK's leading specialist building services providers, its Electrical Services division delivers electrical testing, inspection and compliance services to facility managers and building owners across the country. Here, Cara Batey from the team shares why the season's most overlooked risk may be arriving just as the heatwave ends.

As temperatures rise across the UK this week, most facility managers will be focused on keeping buildings cool, ensuring ventilation systems are performing effectively and managing the operational challenges that come with extreme heat.

But there is another risk that often follows a heatwave and receives far less attention until it becomes a problem.

Lightning.

The UK's weather patterns are becoming increasingly unpredictable. Prolonged periods of hot, humid weather are frequently followed by intense thunderstorms, bringing heavy rainfall, strong winds and lightning strikes capable of causing significant damage to buildings and critical infrastructure.

For facility managers responsible for protecting people, assets and business continuity, now is the time to ask an important question:

Is your building prepared for what comes after the heatwave?

The overlooked summer risk

When most people think about lightning protection, they assume it is a passive system that sits quietly in the background until it is needed.

In reality, lightning protection systems are a critical part of a building's safety infrastructure and require regular inspection, maintenance and testing to ensure they continue to perform as designed.

A lightning strike can affect electrical systems, plant equipment, communications infrastructure, fire detection systems and sensitive technology. Even where a building is fitted with a lightning protection system, there is often uncertainty about whether the system has actually been activated during a storm.

Without clear evidence, facility managers may be left making assumptions about the condition of their protection system and whether further action is required.

Why post-strike inspections matter

One of the most misunderstood aspects of lightning protection is what happens after a strike occurs.

Many assume that if a building remains operational following a storm, the protection system must be working perfectly.

However, under BS EN 62305, any lightning protection system that has experienced a strike should undergo a comprehensive inspection and test to verify that it remains fully effective.

This is not simply a compliance exercise.

A system that has successfully protected a building may have experienced stresses that are not immediately visible. Without proper inspection, building owners could unknowingly remain vulnerable to future events.

As severe weather events become more common, ensuring that protection systems remain operational between storms is becoming increasingly important.

Five questions every facility manager should be asking this summer

As we enter another period of extreme weather, facility managers should consider the following:

1. When was your lightning protection system last inspected?

Regular inspection and testing are essential to ensure compliance and ongoing protection.

2. Do you know whether your system has been activated?

Many buildings have no reliable method of confirming whether a strike has occurred.

3. Are your critical systems adequately protected?

Electrical infrastructure, data systems and life safety systems may all be vulnerable to lightning-related damage.

4. Do you have a post-strike response plan?

Knowing what action to take following a storm can minimise risk and reduce downtime.

5. Could a Lightning Strike Counter provide greater visibility?

These digital devices can be integrated into many existing lightning protection systems, providing definitive evidence when a strike has occurred and helping to inform maintenance decisions.

Turning data into resilience

Lightning Strike Counters offer facility managers valuable insight into the performance of their protection systems.

Rather than relying on assumptions, building owners can access clear evidence of system activation, helping them determine when additional inspections or maintenance may be required.

In an environment where weather events are becoming more extreme and less predictable, access to accurate information can make all the difference.

Many facility managers assume that if their building survives a lightning strike, their protection system is working perfectly. In reality, any system that has taken a strike should be professionally inspected and tested to ensure it remains fully effective. Lightning Strike Counters remove the uncertainty by providing clear evidence of when a system has been activated.

Preparing for the next storm

Heatwaves may dominate the headlines, but experienced facility managers know that the biggest risks often arrive after the temperatures begin to fall.

As the UK continues to experience more extreme weather patterns, resilience is no longer just about preparing for today’s conditions. It is about ensuring your buildings are ready for what comes next.

Because the question is not whether severe storms will return.

It is whether your building will be ready when they do.

For advice on lightning protection inspections, post-strike testing or Lightning Strike Counter installation, contact the PTSG Lightning Protection team at LPRepairSales@ptsg.co.uk.