It takes little common sense to avoid being zapped

SEVERAL days ago an article appeared in most of the local dailies quoting a lighting protection expert from Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Associate Professor Dr Mohd Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir was recommending that thunderstorm safety education be made compulsory in schools as a preventive measure to avoid mishaps from occurring.

This little article, which many readers would probably have just glanced through and not given much thought to, certainly caught the Eye's attention.

Why? Because what the expert was talking about, to the Eye, was clearly something that was just simple common sense. Something that many of us grew up with - never play outdoors during a storm, and the dos and don'ts when there is lightning.

It got the Eye thinking - are young parents these days forgetting to tell their kids what our parents told us back then even though we had even less electrical appliances in those days?

Okay, so the expert said that when thunderstorms occur, all indoor and outdoor activities must stop until it is over, to avoid damage to property and personal injury.

That is common sense to the Eye.

So what brought about this piece of advice? Apparently (many of us here in Sarawak are probably not even aware of this incident), last week, a student in Shah Alam died after he was struck by lightning while his friend was injured after playing in a district school football tournament, ironically, held at UPM.

Obviously, the game went on. So who are those responsible? The school administrators who organised the game?

And so, the outcome is that UPM would work with the Education Ministry to ensure thunderstorm safety awareness campaigns could be held in schools.

The Eye grew up being drilled with simple common sense. When it comes to storms, come inside. When you are inside during a storm, sit and read a book or do something constructive that does not involve electrical appliances, metal bars or power sockets.

Again, simple common sense. These days, most of our homes are hooked up with gadgets and appliances that run on electricity - washing machines, television sets, home entertainment units, computers, modems, wireless modems, more computers, phone and tablet chargers, microwave ovens, electrical stoves, induction cookers - you name it. They are all plugged in somewhere or another, around the house, Sirim certified, or otherwise.

Some people have the tendency to leave their washing machines, microwave, kettle, computers, modems, entertainment units plugged in 24/7/365. They do not even bother to flip the switch on 'ON' to 'OFF'.

They are either extreme risk takers, or just people without common sense.

Eye do not know about them, but we grew up knowing what power surges are and how they can occur at any time of the day, storm or no storm.

So, in case you are missing some common sense, there are little things that you can do (and make a good habit of) to protect yourself, your family, appliances and homes.

First, always make sure that you have surge protectors, especially for sensitive and high powered appliances like your computer, modems, and home entertainment units.

During lightning and rain, always unplug your appliances - yes, that means to literally pull out the power cords from the power sockets.

Do this too, each time you leave the house - you never know when it will rain here in this country.

Leave on only minimal and necessary appliances (like the refrigerator) or, at the very least, the lights.

And just because raindrops have not fallen, it does not mean you can continue to play outside when it clouds over. Lightning precedes rain, in case you didn't know.

It doesn't take an expert to tell you all this. Just some good old common sense.

Unfortunately, there are those who do not listen to common sense, until the 'experts' come in and get paid to tell us exactly the common sense that our grandparents and parents have been trying to teach us all along - for free.

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