

**MITIGATION OF IMPACTS OF LIGHTNING SURGES  
ON LOW VOLTAGE SIDE OF POWER DISTRIBUTION  
SUBSTATIONS**

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Degree of Master of Science in Electrical Engineering

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## **DECLARATION OF THE CANDIDATE AND SUPERVISORS**

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Signature of the supervisor

(Prof. J.R. Lucas)

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Date

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## **ABSTRACT**

Lightning surges are the major source that causes failure of power electronic equipment in low voltage (LV) power distribution systems, specially for the equipment with low immunity parameters and high sensitivity to surges. The 400/230V low voltage systems are usually affected by lightning mainly by the surges coming through the distribution transformers. In addition to that induced surges or direct strikes on load side could cause damage to distribution substations.

Power utilities are concerned about the possibility of damage to distribution transformers caused by lightning strikes leading power supply failures and other losses including transformer damage, meter equipment damage and damage to the surroundings. Assessment of such occurrences is important in the design of suitable protection schemes and mitigation strategies. The number of incoming surges, their energy content as well as the number and the amplitude of power frequency follow currents determine the level of protection required for each substation. Hence, the assessment of impacts becomes more and more important for the design of lightning protection system.

The methods used in Sri Lanka to assess the impacts of lightning are based on experience of the utility employees or the frequency of protection failures and power supply failures. Specially, when it comes to the low voltage (LV) side, the impacts are not assessed or examined, and in most of the cases, the low voltage side of a substation is not effectively protected from lightning.

In this research the impact of lightning surges particularly on low voltage side of the power distribution substation was analyzed, and the possibilities of using protection mechanism in low voltage side of the power distribution substations were investigated in order to reduce or avoid human and installation damage caused by lightning. Study was limited to power distribution substations in the service area of Distribution Licensee No. 3 (Distribution Division 3 of Ceylon Electricity Board) where the total number of installed distribution substations were around 5000.

Then by simulating the impact of lightning surges on a low voltage side of power distribution substation using PSCAD software, the behavior of the electrical parameters under occurrence of lightning was studied, and based on the observations and results, design parameters for the protection system were derived.

Then the available protection methods for low voltage systems in the world were studied. In the next stage, to protect the low voltage side of the distribution substation economically and safely, application of several protection systems was investigated. Those protection systems included surge protective devices (SPD) and proper grounding mechanisms tried out on LV side of the selected distribution substations of DD3.

Finally, based on the findings of investigation, simulation and pilot installation, a standard protection system was deployed, and results were analyzed to check whether the implemented protection system was effective in electrical terms and monetary terms. Continuous monitoring of protected distribution substations has been carried out and the results were produced in the report.

By the results of the assessment of the impacts of lightning on LV side of power distribution substations, it was obvious that huge amount of visible and invisible losses is incurred to Ceylon Electricity Board. The results of the PSCAD simulation clearly shows that the LV side of the power distribution side is affected in the event of lightning strikes. Hence, it was concluded that the LV side of the power distribution side should be protected to eliminate the impacts of lightning strikes. Finally, this research proposes a standard protection mechanism to protect distribution substations from lightning and the effectiveness of the protection system was proved by the results obtained.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
ABBREVIATIONS .....	xi
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 Lightning Phenomenon .....	2
1.3 Impacts of Lightning on Power Distribution Substations .....	4
1.3.1 Impacts on Medium Voltage side .....	4
1.3.2 Impacts on Low Voltage side .....	5
2 PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION.....	6
2.1 Research Approach .....	6
2.1.1 Distribution Division 3 of CEB .....	6
2.1.2 Impacts of Lightning in Distribution Division 3 of CEB .....	7
2.2 Problem Statement .....	7
2.3 Objectives.....	9
2.4 Methodology .....	9
2.5 Literature Survey.....	11
2.5.1 Lightning Waveforms .....	11
2.5.2 Lightning Protection Standards.....	13
2.5.3 Lightning Protection Devices .....	14
2.5.4 Lightning and the Power Distribution Systems .....	16
2.5.5 Lightning Impact on Distribution Transformers.....	16
2.5.6 Lightning Protection of Distribution Substations .....	17
3 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS OF LIGHTNING IN DD3 .....	19
3.1 Data Collection of DD3.....	19
3.2 Assessment of Damage on Transformers.....	21

3.3	Assessment of Damage on PPMs.....	23
4	SIMULATION OF LIGHTNING ON PDS .....	25
4.1	PSCAD Simulation model .....	25
4.1.1	DT without MV Surge Arrester. Lightning Generated from MV Side .	27
4.1.2	DT with MV Surge Arrester. Lightning from MV Side .....	29
4.1.3	DT with MV Surge Arrester. Lightning Generated from LV Side.....	31
4.1.4	DT with MV and LV Surge Arresters. Lightning Generated from LV Side	35
4.2	Observations of PSCAD Simulation.....	39
5	DESIGN OF LV SURGE PROTECTION SYSTEM.....	40
5.1	Power Distribution Substation Model.....	40
5.1.1	Behavior of the LV side Parameters During a Lightning Strike.....	41
5.1.2	Lightning Protection Zones (LPZ) of PDS .....	43
5.1.3	LV Protection Design Algorithm.....	44
5.2	Design of LV Surge Protection System for PDS .....	45
5.2.1	Design Principles – LV Surge Protection System .....	45
5.2.2	Design Principles –Protection System Parameters .....	46
5.2.3	Selection of Protection System .....	47
6	IMPLEMENTATION OF LV SURGE ARRESTER INSTALLATION.....	50
6.1	Sample Selection of Distribution Substations.....	50
6.2	Installation of LV Surge Arresters .....	52
6.3	Results of Field Implementation .....	56
7	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	59
7.1	Conclusion.....	59
7.2	Recommendation.....	60
7.3	Limitations identified .....	60
8	REFERENCES .....	61

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1: Distribution Network infrastructure of the DD3 as at year 2014 .....	19
Table 3-2: Cost of Burnt Transformers during 2012-2014 in DD3 .....	22
Table 3-3: Cost of replacing burnt PPMs in 2012-2014 in DD3 .....	23
Table 5-1: Comparison of LV side SPDs .....	48
Table 5-2: Characteristics of ABB LOVOS 10 Surge Arrester .....	49
Table 6-1: Sample Selection for Surge Arrester Installation .....	50
Table 6-2: Selection of Control Sample.....	50
Table 6-3: PPM burnings after LV Surge Protection.....	56
Table 6-4: PPM burnings after LV Surge Protection.....	56

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Distribution Divisions of Ceylon Electricity Board.....	2
Figure 1.2: Global Distribution of Lightning 1995-2003 by NASA .....	3
Figure 1.3: Seasonal Distribution of Lightning in Sr Lanka 1974 – 2008 (www.desinventar.lk).....	3
Figure 2.1: Area Structure of the Distribution division 3 .....	6
Figure 2.2: Burnt Transformer and damaged wiring and structure at Ukuwelakanda PDS, Horana .....	8
Figure 2.3: Burnt energy meters and damaged MCB and structure at Super Pack Substation, Sri Jayawardanapura .....	8
Figure 2.4: Typical Lightning Waveform.....	11
Figure 2.5: Standard Lightning Current Waveforms .....	12
Figure 2.6: Standard Lightning Voltage Waveform .....	12
Figure 3.1: Capacity wise Transformer Population .....	20
Figure 3.2: Area wise Population of Bulk Supply Consumers .....	21
Figure 3.3: Burnt Transformers During 2012-2014 in DD3.....	21
Figure 3.4: Burnt PPMs during 2012-2014 in DD3.....	23
Figure 4.1: PSCAD Model of Distribution Transformer with Surge Generator.....	26
Figure 4.2: 5 kA Lightning Surge of 10/350 $\mu$ s Waveform.....	27
Figure 4.3: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 5 kA Lightning on Primary Side.....	27
Figure 4.4: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 10 kA Lightning on Primary Side.....	28
Figure 4.5: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 40 kA Lightning on Primary Side.....	28
Figure 4.6: V-I Characteristics of Hubbell 36 kV Surge Arrester .....	29
Figure 4.7: Primary Voltage Waveform at 10 kA Lightning on Primary Side.....	29
Figure 4.8: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 10 kA Lightning on Primary Side with MV Surge Arrester.....	30
Figure 4.9: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 40 kA Lightning on Primary Side with MV Surge Arrester.....	30
Figure 4.10: PSCAD Model of Distribution Transformer with Surge Generator Connected to LV side with MV Surge Arrester.....	31
Figure 4.11: Primary Voltage Waveform at 5 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV Surge Arrester.....	32

Figure 4.12: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 5 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV Surge Arrester.....	32
Figure 4.13: Primary Voltage Waveform at 10 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV Surge Arrester.....	33
Figure 4.14: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 10 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV Surge Arrester.....	33
Figure 4.15: Primary Voltage Waveform at 40 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV Surge Arrester.....	34
Figure 4.16: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 40 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV Surge Arrester.....	34
Figure 4.17:PSCAD Model of Distribution Transformer with Surge Generator Connected to LV side with MV and LV Surge Arresters.....	35
Figure 4.18: Primary Voltage Waveform at 5 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV and LV SPDs .....	36
Figure 4.19: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 5 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV and LV SPDs .....	36
Figure 4.20: Primary Voltage Waveform at 10 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV and LV SPDs .....	37
Figure 4.21: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 10 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV and LV SPDs .....	37
Figure 4.22: Primary Voltage Waveform at 40 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV and LV SPDs .....	38
Figure 4.23: Secondary Voltage Waveform at 40 kA Lightning on Secondary Side with MV and LV SPDs .....	38
Figure 5.1: Typical Power Distribution Substation .....	40
Figure 5.2: Single Line Diagram of PDS during Lightning on MV Side.....	41
Figure 5.3: Single Line Diagram of PDS during Lightning on LV Side .....	42
Figure 5.4: Lightning Protection Zones in PDS.....	43
Figure 5.5: LV Protection Design Algorithm .....	44
Figure 6.1: Transformers in Selected Sample Against Total in DD3 .....	51
Figure 6.2: LV Surge arrester connection at PDS.....	52
Figure 6.3: LV Arrester Installation at Furgurson Garment, Rathnapura.....	53
Figure 6.4: LV Arrester Installation at Tea Small Holdings, Horana.....	53

Figure 6.5: Installation at Labugama Water Treatment Plant, Awissawella .....	54
Figure 6.6: Installation on PPM at Sripali, Horana.....	54
Figure 6.7: Disconnected Arrester at Sripali, Horana.....	55
Figure 6.8: Comparison of burnt PPMs in DD3 during 2013 – 2016.....	57
Figure 6.9: Burnt DT during 2013 – 2016 Against the Sample Selected .....	58
Figure 6.10: Burnt DTs in DD3 during 2012 – 2015.....	58

# ABBREVIATIONS

CEB	Ceylon Electricity Board
DD3	Distribution Division 3
kVA	kilovolt Ampere
kW	kilo Watt
kWh	kilo Watt hour
LV	Low Voltage
MV	Medium Voltage
HV	High Voltage
HT	High Tension
LT	Low Tension
PDS	Power Distribution Substation
DT	Distribution Transformer
SPD	Surge Protection Device
$I_n$	Nominal Discharge Current
$I_{imp}$	Impulse current
$U_c$	Continuous Operating Voltage
$U_p$	Protection Voltage
BIL	Basic Insulation Level
ac	Alternating Current
PPM	Programmable Polyphase Meter
TDT	Time of Day Tariff
CT	Current Transformer
MOV	Metal oxide varistor