



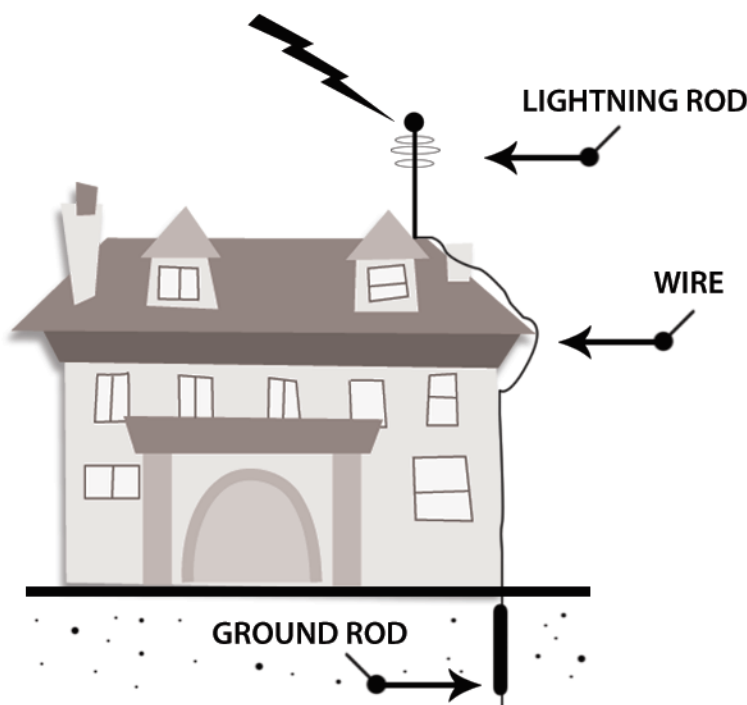
LIGHTNING RODS



Lightning rods are metal poles placed on buildings to divert lightning strikes, invented by Benjamin Franklin in the mid-1700s as a direct result of his famous kite experiment. In Franklin's time, a lightning storm meant the possibility of damage to homes and property because citizens had no way of protecting themselves from lightning strikes.

When lightning strikes, it begins looking for a path to connect to the ground. If it happens to deem a nearby building the perfect path, the building could very easily catch fire, as lightning can get up to tens of thousands of degrees Fahrenheit. A lightning rod is put in place so that, if lightning were to strike the building, it would attach itself to the far more conductive metal rod instead of the wood.

Despite what many people believe, lightning rods don't "attract" lightning -- they simply divert it away the flammable structure in the event of a strike. The lightning rod is important because it's one of the first examples of humans "outsmarting" a destructive natural force.



The lightning rod is actually a very simple construction: the spike sticks out of the top of the building and is connected to a conductive wire that leads to a large metal grid or rod in the ground. When lightning strikes the rod, it follows the path of the wire into the ground, where it is rendered harmless.

You may have heard someone refer to another person, usually a celebrity or public figure, as a "lightning rod" – it's often used to describe someone whose actions attract or inspire controversy.

