

PUBLISHED: 9TH SEPTEMBER 2004 17:35 BST+1

New phone masts "attract lightning"

Researchers have warned mobile service providers that tall mobile phone masts attract lightning, according to Wednesday's Dagens Nyheter.

"Mobile phone providers have to understand that they put people at risk if they build tall masts in large urban areas", said Vernon Cooray, Meteorology Researcher at Uppsala University.

Many people have contacted Cooray recently complaining about frequent strikes of lightning after tall masts have been put up in the area.

Masts that are between ten meters and twenty meters tall "only attract lightning that would have struck the area anyway". But new 3G masts can be over fifty meters high, and apparently cause electric currents in the atmosphere.

Most masts are connected to the same electric source as the houses nearby and people have already contacted Cooray with tales of destroyed electrical home goods.

"These tall masts have only been built quite recently, so there hasn't been that much trouble yet," said Cooray. "Although people have started to complain."

Cooray believes there should be separate earthed electronic systems for mobile masts to avoid the problem.

- Jenny Lepley