



## Five Safety Issues to Note When Installing Outdoor AV

It's not just the post office who has to deal with snow, rain, heat and the gloom of night. It's also what an outdoor entertainment system has to endure.

So when you're putting that AV equipment into an outdoor setting, where hundreds or even thousands of people will be entertained or informed by your work, you'd better take extra precautions.

Here are a few safety issues to consider when installing outdoor AV.



## Choosing the Equipment

You wouldn't leave that trusty iPad or iPhone outside in the rain or even under brutal sunlight. Why would you do the same with a TV? Well, some AV equipment is actually built to withstand those elements.

Those pieces are outdoor-rated and come sporting Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA) certification. This basically means that a third-party association has put that equipment through the ringer, in order to make sure it can handle being outside for a lengthy period of time.

It doesn't just make sure that those TVs don't burst into flames, however, but also that each piece can actually survive that type of abuse—and perform well while doing so.

Some manufacturers even run their own tests as an added bonus. For instance, SunBriteTV conducts several of its own analyses. In fact, the company recently subjected some of the displays in its Pro Series to living in a salt-fog chamber, which can simulate years of use under high-heat and salty weather conditions.

It's definitely interesting to see what types of torture-tests that these manufacturers can come up with, but just know that these TVs also have the UL and CSA seal of approval. This is what installers should always seek out.

"It's not just us saying that the product is safe," says Jonathan Johnson, director of brand marketing for SunBriteTV. "It's a third-party lab that's developing, independently testing and verifying that the product is fit for that application."

And in case you haven't noticed, those certifications don't come with indoor TVs, meaning that those are not appropriate for an outdoor install—no matter how much your client is pushing for it. It's important to let your clients know that using an indoor TV outside won't produce the same type of experience because they can't fight off glare or deliver the same type of bright image in ambient light.

More importantly, it's a safety hazard. If lawsuits seem farfetched, costly repairs and replacement AV is certainly something your client would be on the hook for, since putting an indoor TV outside will absolutely void the manufacturer's warranty.

# The Hookup

We're not going to help you install every wire, connector and cover. That's what your electrician is for. You'll need to seek out a licensed professional to make sure that all of your electrical needs are there—and up to code. And that pro doesn't just need to know the National Electrical Code, but municipal codes as well.

Know that grounded circuits, GFIs and everything else exposed to the elements needs to be protected. This includes adding things like weatherproof fittings and cables, whether those will be buried or above ground, as well as covers for outlets that can withstand the elements as much as the actual outdoor AV products.

Kevin Burnley, president/owner of Creative Audio Video and Automation out of St Louis, Mo., says it's also a smart move to use shielded cable outdoors, to combat the interference from cell phones, radio-frequency products, and other obstacles.

Having the proper tools to put all of those things into the install is just as important, too. Jonathan Beitz, president of JAVI A/V LLC out of San Antonio, Texas, says that 100 percent of his business is commercial-based. So he's very familiar with how to safely install AV in this type of setting. Proper tools, good working ladders, and the right amount of staff are all part of his equation.

Beitz says that there can be safety in numbers, saying that the weight and height of the TV will dictate how many employees are needed for the job. And a ladder is definitely a must when installing a TV in an outdoor commercial setting, since you want those devices up high and out of the way. A lift should even be considered, depending on the configuration.

"Putting it out of reach is important, if you're in a bar or restaurant," adds Burnley. "You've got to put them high enough so the kids aren't going to hang on the thing."