

VAISALA

Lightning and the solar energy life cycle

How Vaisala provides the best
global data for safety and efficiency





The lightning factor

Lightning is among the most under-addressed risks in solar energy. The risk of putting large, conductive structures in the middle of open spaces or near dry vegetation that could catch fire is easy to understand — but lightning’s effects throughout the entire solar energy life cycle are more nuanced and complex than that.

From the moment a site is evaluated, or resources assessed, work crews and equipment are exposed. Operational continuity is impacted not just by lightning damage or wildfires, but by inefficient stopping and starting of projects due to poor storm awareness. Furthermore, crucial construction and materials decisions are affected by a site’s long-term lightning patterns — which, if misunderstood, can result in significant inefficiency and extra costs even if not a single lightning strike ever takes place while the solar farm is operational.

Modern data, modern operations

Fortunately, modern data-as-a-service lightning solutions are cost-effective, low-risk ways to improve weather awareness and project success. They are available immediately, with little or no capital costs, construction, or permitting, and the gains they provide can readily offset the investment it takes to use them.

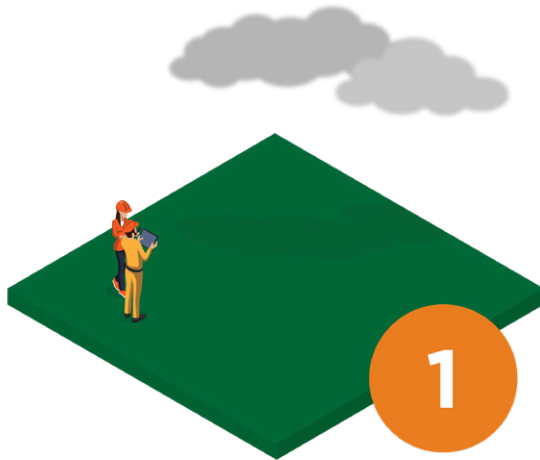
Vaisala's lightning solutions are unique in the world because they are rooted in our proprietary ground-based network data, Global Lightning Dataset (GLD360) and National Lightning Detection Network (NLDN). No other lightning detection networks are as reliable, cover the entire globe with such resolution and accuracy, offer the same consistent level of performance, or can be seamlessly integrated to improve so many other technologies.

This guide walks you through a typical scenario where lightning awareness is critical, and it introduces Vaisala's core lightning solutions for solar energy. By the end, you'll better understand lightning's implications for your project and the options immediately available to you.



Lightning and the life cycle

A theoretical solar farm case study



The site is assessed

- The developer establishes a precise, data-driven understanding of the site's unique lightning patterns and history — which can vary significantly from nearby locales.
- This enables changes to the proposed maintenance budget, layout, and equipment choice.
- Solar resources are objectively understood. Financing is secured and planning is optimized. Confidence is gained.

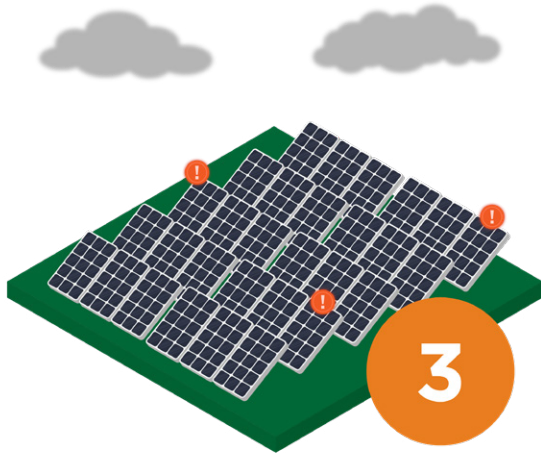
Vaisala solutions: GLD360 or NLDN, Lightning Integrator, plus our free interactive global lightning density map

Construction begins

- People and equipment remain safe with enhanced 24/7 weather awareness specific to this site.
- A storm passes. Crews are held back for safety but resume promptly due to accurate 24/7 storm data, keeping the project on track and avoiding unnecessary downtime.
- Throughout construction and commissioning, teams act with objective data and notifications, keeping people and equipment safe with no guesswork.

Vaisala solutions: GLD360 or NLDN, Thunderstorm Manager, Lightning Threat Zone





Into operations and maintenance

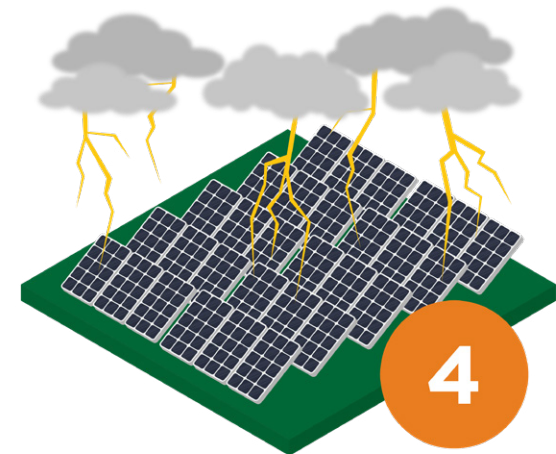
- Safety is maintained as storms come and go. Operators advise maintenance personnel to get to a safe place, proactively reducing the risk of injury.
- Estimates made earlier during development are met.

Vaisala solutions: GLD360 or NLDN, Thunderstorm Manager, Lightning Threat Zone

Lightning strike!

- A lightning strike takes place nearby. Operators predicted it and can determine if a solar installation was hit, the severity of the potential damage, or if the strike was near the solar farm but unlikely to have caused damage or start a wildfire.
- With Vaisala services, they understand the type of lightning, its impact in the area, and the likelihood of damage or potential for a wildfire start.
- Fully informed, the operators avoid wasting resources on unnecessary site inspection visits. Power production continues uninterrupted.
- They also know that in case of future strikes, they can take the necessary measures to carefully evaluate and mitigate damage before it gets worse.

Vaisala solutions: GLD360 or NLDN, Strike Damage Potential, Lightning Exporter, Lightning Integrator





Striking accuracy: Vaisala lightning solutions at a glance

Vaisala's lightning solutions are optimized for the most important needs and use cases in solar energy. They rely on the best lightning detection networks anywhere, and each is easy to integrate into existing systems for quick, reliable value.

These solutions are the ideal ways to augment your situational awareness over the whole life span of your projects. Read on to see how to get started.



Step 1

Subscribe to a Vaisala lightning detection data network

TIP:

See GLD360 and NLDN in action with our free interactive global lightning density map.

The map displays the average lightning density observed for every country and ocean in the world for 2016 through 2021, plus each state/province.

[Check it out →](#)

Global Lightning Dataset (GLD360) and National Lightning Detection Network (NLDN)

There are no lightning detection networks on the planet quite like Vaisala's GLD360 and NLDN. Unmatched in their coverage, accuracy, and availability, they inform countless technologies and applications. They are trusted by the world's leading weather authorities, including the U.S. National Weather Service, FAA, and armed forces.

Developed and managed by Vaisala, these networks are strategic assets for many renewable energy applications — most notably solar and wind energy — where they enable operators to monitor asset availability, receive trustworthy alerts, and stay ahead of hazardous storms.

Key benefits:

- Decisive lightning and storm alerts around solar farms.
- Unrivaled accuracy, even beyond the range of radars and satellites. This provides truly global coverage for users anywhere (GLD360) and unrivaled awareness for North American users (NLDN).
- Smarter decisions and improved safety across many applications and operations, as well as reliable early warning capabilities to reduce downtime.
- Data feeds boast greater than 99.99% uptime, short latency up to only -12-seconds, and are delivered over a variety of real-time methods, file types, and APIs to fit various forecasting, alerting, reporting, and analytical needs.
- Historical lightning data can also be easily accessed and analyzed.
- Available as convenient data services immediately, with no capital costs required.

Step 2

Unleash your data with Vaisala's leading lightning and storm detection software

Thunderstorm Manager

Thunderstorm Manager is the ideal comprehensive lightning detection and mitigation system. It makes GLD360/NLDN insights available through a convenient user interface, improving situational awareness and helping customers stay efficient, informed, and ready for anything.

Key benefits:

- Web-based interface provides real-time tracking and visualizations from any device, flexible display options for different lightning types and parameters, and playback from the previous 7 days.
- Provides various alert types and levels, based on specific project needs.
- Includes Lightning Threat Zone (see below) to track specific storms' trajectory, cell velocities, speed, and direction.



Step 3

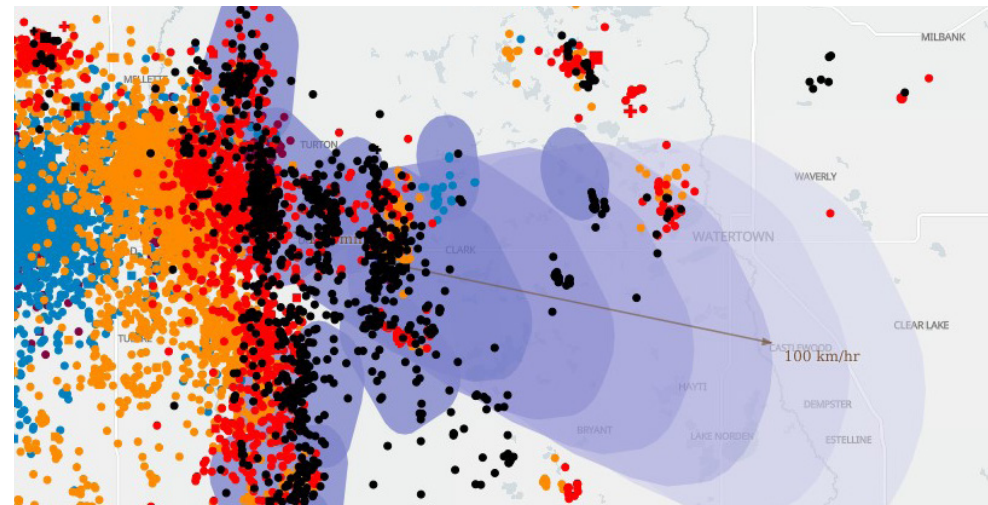
Add other Vaisala lightning data to augment Thunderstorm Manager, or access the data separately to integrate into existing systems

Lightning Threat Zone

Accessible through an API or as part of Thunderstorm Manager, Lightning Threat Zone provides lightning nowcast data for anywhere in the world. This easily integrated API is easily queried and populates customers' existing weather tracking tools with the exact information needed for better situational awareness of thunderstorm and lightning risks.

Key benefits:

- Single-source, real-time access with 99.99% uptime, making the best data available to any user, anywhere.
- Includes an additional information layer with forecast polygons, velocity vector data, and storm severity (API only) for each identified storm.
- Highly localized, early detection of all relevant storms, enabling earlier planning for real threats and avoidance of unnecessary operational disruptions for nonproblematic storms.





Lightning Integrator and Lightning Exporter

Lightning Integrator provides quick and easy access to Vaisala’s high-quality, accurate historical lightning data through an API or an easy-to-use web interface. This enables robust, data-driven safety and planning practices, as well as advanced risk assessments and incident reporting — all informed by the best lightning data on the planet.

Lightning Exporter provides an easy-to-use web interface that lets users download and compile the exact lightning data they need from hazardous weather events near facilities or assets. It enhances report credibility for management, legal teams, unions, or external audiences, and it often eliminates the need to purchase, install, or maintain any lightning detection sensors.

Key benefits:

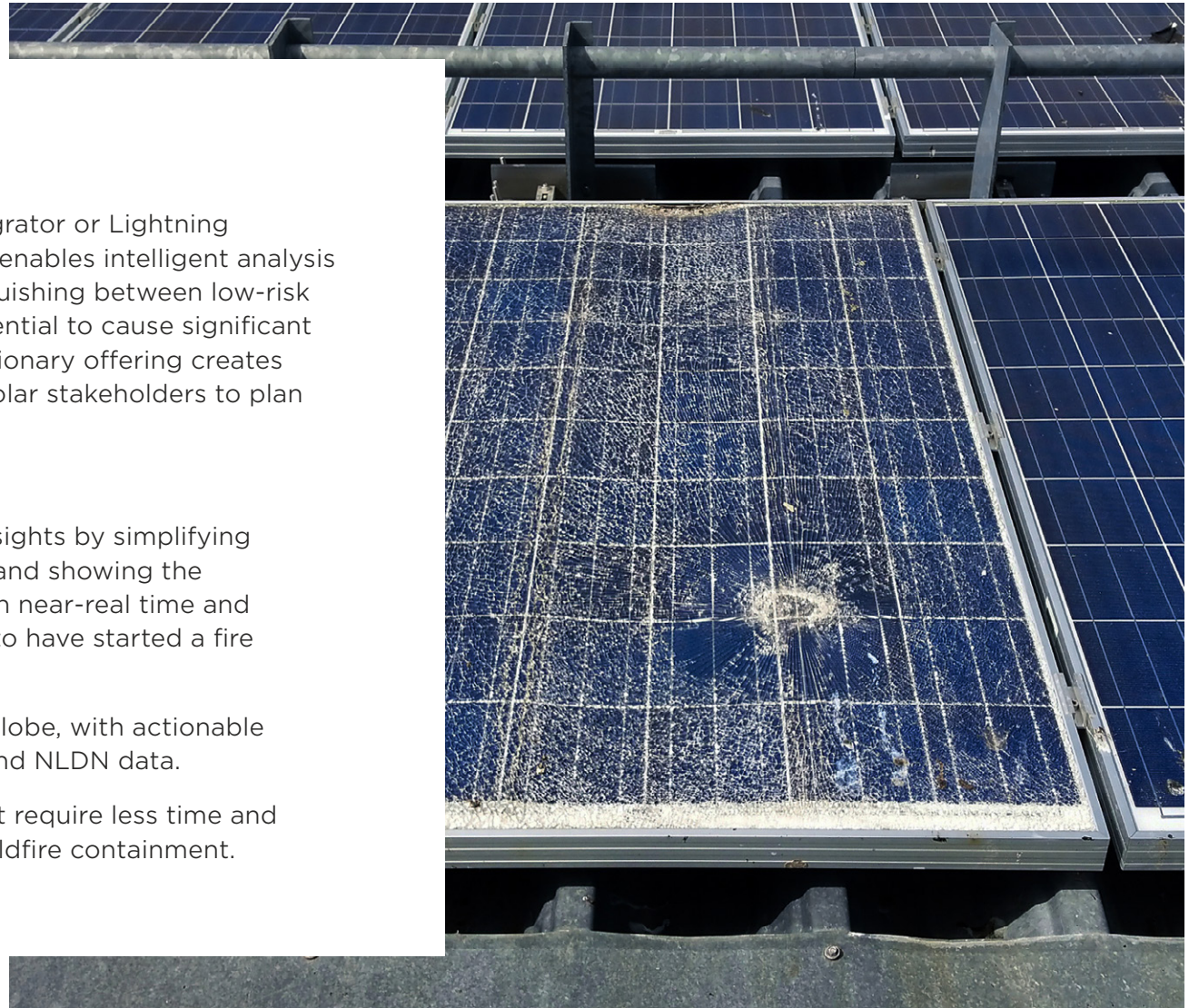
- Reduced downtime through historical and near-real-time storm analysis, even when a solar asset(s) might have been compromised. Teams make better decisions to maximize productivity.
- Confident, objective evaluations derived from the largest, most sophisticated, most accurate lightning detection networks in the world (see GLD360/NLDN).
- Ultimate asset management and storm visibility, no matter where solar operations are located onshore or offshore.
- Improved asset reliability and liability protection resulting from informed emergency, maintenance, and management practices.

Strike Damage Potential

Accessible through Lightning Integrator or Lightning Exporter, Strike Damage Potential enables intelligent analysis of lightning strikes, reliably distinguishing between low-risk strikes and those with greater potential to cause significant damage or start a fire. This revolutionary offering creates substantial efficiency and allows solar stakeholders to plan decisively and quickly.

Key benefits:

- Enables fast, critical lightning insights by simplifying lightning data into strike points and showing the precise location of strikes — both near-real time and historical — that are most likely to have started a fire or caused damage.
- Unrivalled accuracy around the globe, with actionable insights derived from GLD360 and NLDN data.
- Enables earlier interventions that require less time and fewer resources for repairs or wildfire containment.



Why Vaisala for renewable energy?

We are innovators, scientists, and discoverers who are helping fundamentally change how the world is powered. Vaisala elevates wind and solar customers around the globe so they can meet the greatest energy challenges of our time.

Our renewable energy solutions are guided by several key priorities:



Thoughtful evolution

Remain a pioneer in renewable energy, always providing sensible, trusted solutions at the leading edge of R&D.



Smarter at every stage

Provide end-to-end weather and environmental solutions and critical insights throughout the renewable energy life cycle.



Legacy of leadership

Extend our proven track record and global trust to reach more customers in more ways.

Vaisala is the only company to offer 360-degree weather and environmental monitoring solutions — from sensors and systems to digital services and actionable intelligence — nearly anywhere on the planet (and even on Mars). Every Vaisala solution benefits from our 85+ years of experience, pioneering deployments in 170+ countries, and unrivaled thought leadership.

Our innovation story, like the renewable energy story, continues.

Lightning doesn't need to be a game of chance

Lightning awareness improves safety and business outcomes across the entire solar energy life cycle. Vaisala solutions are easy to deploy, trusted around the globe, and immediately available. We're ready anytime to talk with you about your specific needs.

vaisala.com/solar

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