

# Lightning Incidence Model Based on the Electric Field Gradient: 3D Electrostatic Analyses

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**Abstract**— The paper deals with the 3D electrostatic analysis of a lightning strike in a hangar and a power transmission line. The lightning incidence model is based on the electric field gradient. Finally, the simulation results are described and discussed.

**Index Terms**—Lightning, Electrostatic, Finite element.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In [1], a 2D electrostatic analysis of a new lightning incidence model based on the electric field gradient (EFG) was presented. Moreover, the simulations results were carried out for a building and a power transmission line and they were compared with the classical electrogeometrical model (EGM), the rolling-sphere technique (RST) and the leader progression model (LPM) [2]. The present paper estimates the trajectory of lightning strikes from the thundercloud to a grounded metal roof of a hangar. Furthermore, the same procedure will be carried out for 500kV power transmission lines.

## II. ELECTROSTATIC ANALYSES

A lightning occurs when the electric field is higher than the breakeven field (400kV/m—3MV/m) [2]. This model is based on the electric field gradient described by

$$\vec{E}_L(\vec{r}) \approx \vec{E}_b(\vec{r}) + \lambda_t \nabla E_b(\vec{r}), \quad (1)$$

$\vec{E}_b(\vec{r})$  is the background electric field, which is function of the position  $\vec{r}$  and it is generated by the electric potential difference (EPD) between the cloud and the ground.  $\lambda_t$  is the lightning step length (~50m) [3], and  $\vec{E}_L(\vec{r})$  is the lightning electric field. More details about Eq. (1) can be found in [1].

A 3D finite element method (FEM) model of a hangar and a power transmission line (TL) were designed by using the electrostatic module. All simulations were carried out within a cubic domain of 250m x 250m x 250m. The upper level of each domain is defined with -12.5MV, while the lower level is the ground. This is equivalent to a real thundercloud with a potential of (-100MV) at 2km of altitude [4].

The dimensions of the hangar are: 8.60m height, 77.37m width and 229.00m length. The aluminum metal roof has 0.7mm thickness and it is grounded. The second simulation is for a TL composed by three phase conductors, equally spaced by 11.5m and positioned at 40.5m above the reference plane. The TLs are protected by two earth wires spaced by 19m over 54.47m of the reference plane.

## III. RESULTS

In order to evaluate the 3D model, the software COMSOL Multiphysics® was used in a computer with quad-core processor of 2.6GHz. For the hangar, the simulation time was around 4s. The necessary physical memory for the simulation

was 1.34GB and 5.6GB of virtual memory. The electric field is very intense at the roof (about 80MV/m) and the lightning (cyan lines) strikes the building roof, as shown in Fig. 1a. In summary, it is not necessary to add air terminals, as long the roof is grounded. The simulation time for the TL was around 6 min, using 15GB of physical memory and 32GB of virtual memory. As shown in Fig 1b, the cyan lines strike the earth wires.

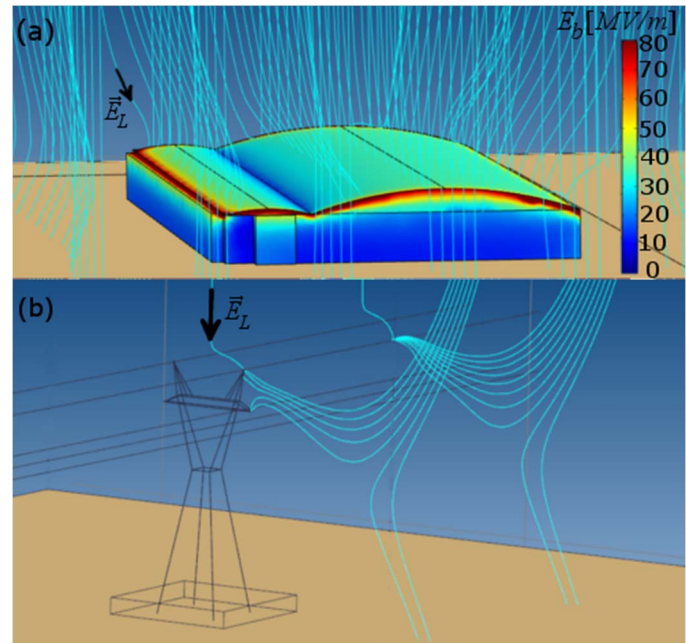


Fig. 1. Case of studies: (a) hangar and (b) power transmission line.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

The EFG simulations predicted that the aluminum metal roof is able to protect the hangar against lightning strikes. In the TL simulation, the earth wires have fulfilled the protection for the phase conductors. Finally, the protection zone and the design of lightning protection system can be evaluated by 3D electrostatic analyses, which are closer to the reality than the 2D analyses. However, 3D models are often more complex and require more simulation time.

## REFERENCES

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