

SAFETY SENSE

Advice On Avoiding Deadly Electrical Fires

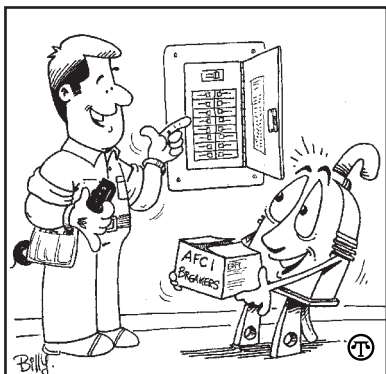
(NAPSA)—Fire safety is no accident. About 40,000 residential electrical fires and 350 deaths occur each year, the majority of which are caused by faulty appliances, extension cords, power strips, and hidden hazards with electrical circuits. In addition to making sure that all appliances, plugs, and cords are in good working order, consumers can add an extra layer of protection by installing a new fire safety device: an arc fault circuit interrupter (AFCI).

Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is at the forefront of the fight to reduce electrical fires, and recommends that parents and homeowners inspect and protect against hazards potentially lurking behind their walls.

“Electrical fires, especially those caused by faulty wiring, are among the most deadly because the fire can start behind the wall and spread throughout much of the home before being detected,” warned ESFI executive director Michael G. Clendenin. “AFCIs offer a protection from those fires we’ve never had before.”

AFCIs provide a more advanced defense against electrical fires, by detecting and stopping electrical arcs. An arc can occur when an electrical wire is punctured or overheats and is a sign that an electrical fire may soon start. AFCIs have special technology that makes it more sensitive to dangers along an electrical circuit that cannot be detected by most breakers and fuses.

Though electrical products are being made safer, homeowners should still heed the following



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advice to avoid potentially fatal electrical fires:

- Look for telltale signs of electrical problems such as dimming of lights, frequent circuit breaker trips or blown fuses.
- Ask a qualified electrician if your home would benefit from AFCI protection, especially during inspections of older homes or upgrades to electrical systems.
- Limit the use of extension cords, use them only temporarily, and never with space heaters or air conditioners.
- Use light bulbs that are the proper wattage for the fixture.
- Make sure smoke alarms are installed on every floor outside sleeping areas and in every bedroom, and are in good working order.

For additional electrical safety information, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.electrical-safety.org or call 703-841-3229.