



Hints For Homeowners

How To Avoid Electrical Fires

(NAPS)—Here's news that may spark your interest: According to the National Fire Protection Association, electrical failures or malfunctions are factors in some 43,000 home fires a year. Your home, however, can be protected. Here, from the experts at Electrical Safety Foundation International, the premier nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety at home and in the workplace, are tips on how:

Have your home inspected by a licensed electrician every 10 years; sooner if your home is 40 years old or older, if it's undergone a major renovation or if you've added major new appliances lately. In between, check out this checklist.

Switches and Outlets

- Are they working?
- Do plugs fit snugly? If so, they should be fine for now.
- Do they make crackling, buzzing or sizzling sounds?
- Are they warm to the touch?

These can be signs of a fire in the wall. Have an electrician check it out right away.

Electrical Panel

Every home has a service panel that distributes electricity to your home. It's usually in the basement, garage or utility area. Service panels have fuses or circuit breakers that keep wires from overloading and causing a fire.

- Make sure all circuit breakers and fuses are the proper size.
- Replace standard circuit breakers with arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs). Damaged or malfunctioning wiring is the leading cause of electrical fires. An arc fault is caused by damaged, overheated or stressed electrical wiring or devices. AFCIs can prevent 50 percent of home fires. Without AFCIs, arc faults may be hidden until it's too late.

Extension Cords

Extension cords are a convenient way to provide power right where you need it when working in or around your



With proper precautions, most electrical fires can be avoided.

home, but using them improperly can be dangerous.

- Extension cords should be used only on a temporary basis.
- Make sure extension cords are properly rated for their intended use, indoor or outdoor, and meet or exceed the power needs of the appliance or device being used.
- Inspect cords for cracked, frayed, loose or bare wires, and loose connections.
- Never use a cord that feels hot.
- Don't run extension cords through walls or ceilings. This may cause the cord to overheat, creating a serious fire hazard.
- Don't nail or staple electrical cords to walls or baseboards.
- Make sure cords are not pinched in doors, windows or under heavy furniture, which could damage the insulation.
- Keep extension cords out of high-traffic areas such as doorways or walkways.
- Insert plugs fully so no part of the prongs is exposed when the extension cord is in use.
- Ensure that all extension cords are certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as UL, CSA or ETL, and always read the manufacturer's instructions.

Learn More

For further facts and tips on safety, visit www.esfi.org.