

## **“Plug into Electrical Safety”**

Electricity is really nothing to be complacent about. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, one person is electrocuted in the home every 36 hours. Each year about 41,000 home electrical fires result in about 370 deaths, 1,400 injuries and \$680 million in property damage. Here are some tips that can help keep you and your family from harm.

### **Look for potential dangers**

- Check all of your electrical cords periodically. Replace them immediately.
- Check out the electrical appliances in your home. Don't use any that appear to be damaged. Look for frayed cords and cracks in the body of the appliance.
- If you experience any trouble with light fixtures, check to make sure they are properly grounded and are in good repair. Take care of any exposed wires and loose-fitting or missing parts before using them.
- And check outlet covers to make sure that they are not cracked or broken. If an outlet feels hot to the touch, discontinue power immediately and seek professional assistance to get the problem corrected.

### **Follow instructions**

- Whenever you buy a new electronic device, read the instructions first.
- Follow any product maintenance schedule suggested by the manufacturer to keep an item operating safely.

### **When in doubt, use a skilled worker**

- When people do their own electrical work, bad things often happen.
- Installers should have full knowledge of the hazards involved and the installation techniques.

### **Use extension cords the right way**

- Extension cords are not a permanent form of wiring.
- Don't use extension cords in high-traffic areas.
- Don't run cords underneath rugs, carpets or furniture.
- If the cord becomes frayed or cracked, if the plug and the body of the cord get noticeably hot, or if the plastic starts to get soft, the wires within are failing and the cord should be replaced.
- Be sure an extension cord can accommodate the wattage of the appliance you will use with. You'll find power ratings (in watts) on cords and on appliances.
- When you use outdoor tools and appliances, use only extension cords that are marked for outdoor use.
- When you disconnect a cord from a socket, pull it by the plug rather than by the cord.
- Never unplug (or plug in) an appliance while your hands are wet.

### **Figure out fuses**

- Fuses burn out or blow when there is an overload.
- When you replace a blown fuse, only use one identical in size and rating. If you use a larger one, it can allow too much electricity to flow through. This can damage your wiring and result in a fire.
- If you are in doubt, ask an electrician.

### **Use circuit breakers correctly**

- Circuit breakers are safety devices in your electrical panel that protect against electrical overload. An overload occurs when the demand for electricity to a certain area of your home exceeds what your system can safely handle. When that happens, a circuit breaker “trips” its switch and opens the circuit to prevent the flow of electricity.
- To get everything working again, you must close the circuit manually. Open your electrical box and find the affected circuit. Flip the switch all the way to the “OFF” position before you move it to “ON”.
- Never do the above if you are standing in water. If you can’t get the power back after about three tries, call an electrician.

### **Prevent a shocking occurrence**

- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in areas where electrical appliances are likely to come in contact with water—kitchens, bathrooms and outdoors. When a GFCI senses current leakage in an electrical circuit, it interrupts power fast enough to help prevent serious illness from electrical shock.
- Test GFCIs monthly and after electrical storm. For a guide on how to test GFCIs, go to the NESF Web site, [www.nesf.org](http://www.nesf.org).
- Cover unused outlets with safety covers and always use double-insulated power tools.

### **Know when to unplug**

- Unplug all small appliances when they are not in use. Even an appliance that is not turned on, such as a hair dryer, could electrocute you if it falls into water.
- Never reach into water to retrieve an appliance unless you’re certain that it’s unplugged.

### **Schedule an inspection if necessary**

- Most experts agree that old in-wall wiring presents a fire hazard when its insulation breaks down or it becomes overloaded.
- If you experience dimming of lights or heat around switches, have it checked as soon as possible.
- Otherwise, a general inspection should be done at least every 40 years.

### **Use space heaters safely**

- Always look for a heater with a UL mark on it—that means it has been tested and meets safety standards.

- Keep the heater at least 3 feet away from combustible materials and water.
- Don't use a heater in a room where children are unsupervised.
- Turn off the heater and unplug it when you leave the room for an extended period.
- Don't use a heater to warm bedding, cook food, thaw pipes or dry clothing.

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