Electrical Safety

Hundreds of fires and medical emergencies are caused by electrical hazards each year. It is important to know how to use electrical appliances safely.

General Safety

The size of electrical wire is important. Call a licensed electrician to inspect the wiring in your home to make sure it meets current safety codes.

- A "circuit breaker" or "fuse" is a safety device designed to prevent accidental overloading of electrical circuits. They are set at a specific amperage. When that amperage is exceeded, it trips and shuts off the flow of electricity, stopping the circuit from continued overheating. When a fuse or circuit breaker trips, it is important to find the cause and correct it. Often, people will just reset the breaker or put in larger fuse. NEVER USE OVERSIZED FUSES ON CIRCUIT BREAKERS. NEVER SUBSTITUTE A PENNY OR FOIL-WRAPPED FUSE. This could cause a fire!
- When remodeling or building a home, make sure there are enough outlets in every room to avoid using multiple plugs or extension cords. Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (G.F.C.I. or just GFI) on circuits in the bathroom, or outdoors where water or moisture is present. G.F.I. is a type of very sensitive circuit. Check with your local building department for requirements.
- When choosing an electrical appliance, be sure it is approved by a safety-testing laboratory. This insures that it has been constructed in accordance with nationally-accepted electrical standards and has been evaluated for safety. Use the appliance only according to manufacturer's specific instructions.
- If you touch an electrical appliance, wall switch or electrical cord while you are wet or standing in water, it will increase the chance of electrical shock.
- Do not use an extension cord in place of permanent wiring, especially if a tripping hazard exists or where there is high physical abuse, such as under a carpet.
- Keep electrical cords away from infants and toddlers and use tamperproof inserts on wall outlets to prevent them from sticking objects into the outlets. Do not run cords around objects or hang on a nail.
- Inspect cords periodically for overall condition.

Safety with Electrical Appliances

The potential for electrical shock or fire from an electrical appliance is very real, especially when safety recommendations are not followed. Before buying an appliance, look for the label of a recognized testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratory or Factory Mutual.

- Keep space heaters, stoves, irons and other heat-producing appliances away from furniture, curtains, bedding or towels. Also, give televisions, stereos and computers plenty of air-space so they won't overheat.
- Never use an appliance with a damaged cord, and be sure to use three-pronged electrical devices in three-pronged outlets. These outlets may not be available in older homes, so use a three-pronged adapter, and screw the tab onto the grounded outlet box cover. Never cut off or bend the grounding pin of the plug. If you have a polarized plug (with one side wider than the other), never file it down or try to make it reversible.
- Keep electrical cords out of the path of traffic. If you put cords under carpets or rugs, wires can be damaged and might result in fire.
- Don't wrap an electrical cord around an appliance until the appliance has cooled.
- Because hair care equipment is often used in bathrooms near sinks and bathtubs, it is extremely important to be especially careful that the appliances do not come in contact with water. If one drops into water, do not touch it until you have pulled the wall plug.
- Protect young children by putting plastic inserts in receptacle outlets not in use to keep them from putting anything into outlets.
- Never put a kitchen knife or other metal object in a toaster to remove stuck bread or bagels unless it is unplugged and cooled. Install television and radio antennas where they cannot fall across power lines. Use caution when operating a tree-pruning device or using a metal ladder around power lines.
- Inspect appliances regularly to make sure they operate properly. If an appliance smells funny when in use, makes unusual sounds or the cord feels warm to touch, repair or replace the unit.
- Don't repair it yourself unless you are qualified.

Electrical Emergencies

When an electrical emergency occurs, there are several survival actions that can be taken. You should know how to trip the main circuit breaker at the electrical panel to turn off all power to the house.

- If an appliance smells funny or operates improperly, pull the plug if it can be done safely. If arcing, burning or smoking from an appliance occurs, turn off the power at the circuit breaker and **CALL THE FIRE DEPARTMENT**.
- Winds accompanying thunderstorms may knock down power lines or utility poles. Keep people away from the area, and call the fire department. If power lines come in contact with a vehicle, do not touch it or the vehicle. If people are inside, tell them to stay

inside. If they try to exit, they may complete a grounded electrical circuit and be instantly killed. They must stay inside until the power is shut by the utility company.

- If a serious electrical malfunction occurs in your home, school or workplace, it is the same as a fire. Notify others, activate the fire alarm and exit promptly. If you are familiar with the operation of a fire extinguisher, you can use only a "Class C" Fire Extinguisher on an electrical fire.