

Electrical Safety at Home

Our homes are filled with modern conveniences which run on electricity, but each year more than 50,000 home fires and hundreds of deaths results from electrical problems. Unsafe electrical conditions common to most homes include overloaded circuits, damaged insulation, and misuse of extension cords and electrical products.

Take a few minutes to look for and correct electrical safety hazards in your home. It does not take too long to check the insulation on a cord, move an appliance away from water, check for correct wattage light bulbs or install a GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter). It could prevent an electrical safety hazard and save lives. You can protect your family and yourself by taking the following steps:

Electrical Systems Safety

- If your power goes out a lot and the lights in your home flicker, smell bad or make noise, have an electrician inspect your wiring.
- Electrical outlets near sinks, such as in the bathroom and kitchen, should have a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI). This is a tool that protects you from a dangerous shock when water and electricity come together. If these are not present, an electrician can install them for you.
- All electrical outlets and switches should be covered by faceplates; replace broken faceplates immediately.
- All electrical cords should be in good condition, meaning they are not frayed, torn, cut, etc.
- When using an extension cord, make sure it is the correct gauge for the item you are plugging in to it; the cord should have be marked with its input/maximum load rating.
- Don't tie or knot cords and don't set furniture on top of them. Don't run cords under rugs or doors. Try not to run cords across frequently used walkways unless you secure the cords properly
- Don't remove a plug from a power point by pulling on the cord; pull the plug instead.
- Never remove a ground plug from an electrical appliance; if you only have 2-prong outlets, you must use an adapter and follow the directions for use carefully.
- Use socket covers on sockets accessible to young children.
- Never plug power strips or adaptors into another power strip or adaptor, called daisy chaining, and avoid using adaptors filled with plugs where possible.
- Do not use electricity outside in areas where water is present, for example around rain or snow, or where the cord may be run over, cut into, or severed.

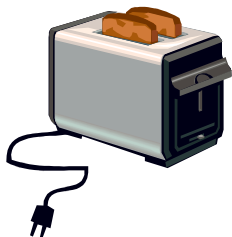


Lighting Safety

- Use the right light bulbs in all lamps and light fixtures. Look inside the light fixture. Find the label that tells you which light bulb size (wattage) is right for the fixture.

Small Appliance Safety

- Look for a mark on the label such as ETL or UL, pictured here on the right, when you buy electrical appliances (such as toasters, microwaves or coffee makers) and cords. This will tell you the product has been tested for safety.
- Appliances that generate heat, such as clocks, televisions and computer monitors, should be given several inches of clearance all around for good air circulation and cooling. Do not drape clothes, toys or other items over warm appliances.
- Keep all electrical appliances away from water such as sinks, bathtubs, pools or overhead vents that may drip.
- Do not operate any electrical appliance with wet hands or while standing in water.
- Keep clothes, curtains, toys and other potentially combustible materials at least three feet away from radiators, space heaters, heating vents and other heat sources.
- Don't plug in too many appliances at once, which can overload the outlet and cause a fire.
- Unplug toaster ovens, coffee makers, cell phone chargers and other small appliances after using them. These items continue to draw power even when they are not in use.



Sources: http://homesafetycouncil.org/SafetyGuide/sg_electrical_w001.asp
http://safety.lovetoknow.com/Electrical_Safety_Tips_at_Home
<http://www.doityourself.com/scat/safetytips>
<http://www.electricity-guide.org.uk/safety.html>