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ESFI Encourages Consumers to Install AFCIs

Arlington, VA – Arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) are electrical safety devices designed to prevent fires caused by dangerous electrical arcs. According to the U.S. Fire Administration,* home electrical problems accounted for an estimated 67,800 fires and \$868 million in property losses in 2003. Electrical fires also cause an estimated 485 deaths annually and injure almost 2,300 more individuals. For this reason, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) suggests that homeowners consider installing AFCI protection in general purpose circuits throughout the home.

Arc-faults can trigger fires and threaten life when flammable materials such as cloth, paper and wood in walls are present. These arcs can occur along the circuit in residential electrical systems and at outlets and switches, behind walls. Such hidden electrical fires can spread rapidly, undetected by smoke alarms, reducing the chances of survival.

“For example, if you’re hanging a picture and nick an electrical wire with a nail, you may trigger an arc and not be aware of the hazard,” ESFI Executive President Brett Brenner explained. “Arcing faults do not necessarily create an overload that causes a traditional circuit breaker to trip or a fuse to blow.”

AFCIs are the next generation product in electrical circuit protection. As you evaluate your new home’s construction or consider upgrading or remodeling your current electrical system, consider enhancing the protection of your electrical system with AFCIs.

For more information on AFCIs visit the ESFI Library on the ESFI’s website, www.electircal-safety.org to download a free copy of the AFCI brochure. Print copies can also be ordered through ESFI’s website, or call ESFI at 703-841-3229.

ESFI reminds everyone that electricity is a powerful tool. It can also be a lethal hazard. Better safety standards have reduced electrical hazards that cause deaths, injuries and property damage. But good safety habits are still the best prevention against electrical hazards.

*USFA. 2006. "On the Safety Circuit: A Factsheet on Home Electrical Fire Prevention."
U.S. Fire Administration

Founded in 1994 through a joint effort between Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL), the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is North America's only non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety in the home and workplace.

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