



**For Immediate Release:
February 24, 2005**

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Avoid Outdoor Electrical Hazards at Work and Home

Warmer weather brings an increase in outdoor work in many parts of the country, both on the job and at home. Increasing electrical safety awareness can help ensure those activities do not result in injuries and deaths, according to the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI).

Thousands of workers are injured or killed each year due to electrical hazards. Electricity ranks sixth among all causes of occupational fatalities, according to studies developed by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and published by the National Safety Council (NSC). The construction industry alone accounted for approximately 44 percent of electrical fatalities, according to NSC data.

Studies from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) indicate that while the death rate due to electrocution may be on the decline, more can be done to increase electrical safety awareness. The total number of electrocutions that were related to consumer products dropped 35 percent from 1991 to 2001.

“Whether working construction or working around your home, taking steps to avoid some of the primary causes of electrocutions and injuries can help keep you safe on the job,” notes Michael G. Clendenin, executive director of ESFI.

Awareness of the more frequent causes of electrical injuries—and following basic electrical safety guidelines—can help reduce electrical safety hazards for you, your family, friends and coworkers.

- In the workplace, contact with overhead power lines caused approximately 40 percent of job-related fatalities, NSC data shows.

(more)

AVOID OUTDOOR ELECTRICAL HAZARDS/ADD ONE

- Contact with electric current from machines, tools, appliances, light fixtures or electrical wiring was a major cause of injuries and time away from the job, according to NSC statistics. CPSC listed large appliances as a cause of 34 percent of consumer-related electrocutions.
- CPSC studies found that ladders coming into contact with power lines caused 9 percent of consumer-related electrocutions.
- Gardening, lawn and farming equipment resulted in approximately 7 percent of the consumer-product electrocutions in the CPSC study.

ESFI notes that following safety rules can reduce electrical deaths and injuries:

- Water does not mix with electricity. Avoid damp conditions—including wet grass—when using electricity.
- Ladders—even those made of wood—carried in an upright position can contact a power line with potentially fatal results.
- Unplug outdoor tools and appliances when not in use.
- Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housing and repair or replace damaged items.
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) on outdoor outlets. Portable GFCIs are available from most hardware and home improvement stores.

For more electrical safety information, visit www.electrical-safety.org, and be sure to download the *Outdoor Electrical Safety Check*, in ESFI's Library.

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, school and workplace. ESFI is a 501(c)(3) organization funded by electrical manufacturers and distributors, independent testing laboratories, utilities, safety and consumer groups, and trade and labor associations. ESFI sponsors National Electrical Safety Month each May, and engages in public education campaigns and proactive media relations to help reduce property damage, personal injury and death due to electrical accidents. The Foundation does not engage in code or standard writing or lobbying and does not solicit individuals.

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

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