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Electrical Panel Labels Take Guesswork Out of Identifying Circuits

Arlington, Va. -- We've all been there: to replace a light switch or ceiling fan, the circuit must be turned off at the electrical panel. You open the panel door, and are confronted with a hand-scribbled, illegible table of your electrical circuits. How do you tell which breaker to turn off or fuse to pull?

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) has created a sheet of peel-and-stick electrical panel labels to help reduce instances of electrocution that can occur if live wires are accidentally touched during home repair or upgrades. Included are both pre-printed and blank labels that homeowners can mark with indelible ink and place directly on each breaker or fuse. The sheet also provides two stickers that remind homeowners and contractors to take safety precautions before working with a home's wiring.

"When researching this project, I opened my own electrical panel and was surprised by what I found," said Brett C. Brenner, ESFI president. "The list was impossible to read. I thought, 'ESFI can help here.'"

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Even when circuits are legibly marked, often the notations are too vague to be of much use. "Lighting 1," "lighting 2" or "upstairs" are common, especially in older homes. ESFI recommends that both homeowners and contractors be as specific as possible when marking circuits, writing, for example, "east master BR wall" instead of "master BR 1."

Because most homes contain such appliances as furnaces, ovens and refrigerators, there are pre-printed labels for those and other common items. There are 30 numbered and several blank labels to allow homeowners to most closely match their homes' circuitry.

ESFI strongly urges that electrical work be performed by a licensed electrician, and reminds homeowners that some electrical work requires a permit.

Visit <http://www.esfi.org/esfi-library.html#epi> to order a free copy of the labels; www.electrical-safety.org for information about other ESFI electrical safety materials.

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. 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.