



Aging Happens...But Fires Do Not Have To *ESFI Encourages Consumers to Install AFCIs*

For Immediate Release

February 2008

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Arlington, VA – Reducing the danger of certain electrical fires in a home may be as simple as installing a single device. Arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) are electrical safety devices designed to prevent fires caused by dangerous electrical arcs. According to the National Fire Protection Association, electrical arcing is the source of ignition in more than 37,700 fires annually. These fires cause an average of 240 deaths, 890 injuries and \$703 million in direct property damage. This May, during National Electrical Safety Month, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) suggests that homeowners consider installing AFCI protection in general purpose circuits throughout their older home.

Arcing faults often occur in damaged or deteriorated wires and cords. Some causes of damaged and deteriorated wiring include puncturing of wire insulation from picture hanging or cable staples, poorly installed outlets or switches, cords caught in doors or under furniture, furniture pushed against plugs in an outlet, natural aging, and cord exposure to heat vents and sunlight. 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 by providing a higher level of protection than a standard circuit breaker by detecting and removing the hazardous arcing condition before it becomes a fire hazard. Although AFCIs are only required to be installed to certain circuits in new residential construction, AFCIs should be considered for added protection in other circuits and for existing homes as well. Older homes with aging and deteriorating wiring systems can especially benefit from the added protection of AFCIs.

May is National Electrical Safety Month, but the focus on electrical safety should continue year-round. Taking these simple safety precautions could prevent you from being one of the thousands of people injured or even killed by preventable electrical hazards each year.

ESFI's 2008 May Kit is available for downloading at no charge from the online library at www.electrical-safety.org.

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