

GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTERS



With more than 400 million devices installed nationwide, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) have been credited with reducing the number of electrocutions dramatically in the last 25 years.

GFCIs are products designed to prevent serious injury or death from electrical shock by detecting ground faults at very low levels.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), if a GFCI was installed in every U.S. household, nearly 70 percent of the approximately 330 electrocutions that occur each year in the home could be prevented.

Three types of GFCIs are designed for home use - wall receptacle, circuit breaker, and portable plug-in. These devices are readily available, inexpensive and can be fairly simple to install.

This fact sheet provides basic information about GFCIs, and offers helpful guidelines that should be followed to test your GFCI outlets and ensure that they are working properly this holiday season.

To learn more about the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) and holiday safety, visit www.holidaysafety.org.

GFCI SAFETY TIPS

- As the number of visitors in your home increases over the holidays and electrical decorations are put up inside and out, be sure to test your GFCIs.
- For electric shock protection, plug outdoor lights and electric decorations into circuits protected by GFCIs.
- A GFCI should be used in any area where water may come in contact with electrical products.
- GFCIs are now required by code in certain areas of the home, including unfinished basements, kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms, garages, crawl spaces and around swimming pools.
- Most often installed in kitchens, bathrooms, and outdoors, GFCIs are designed to minimize shock and electrocution, especially when electrical appliances inadvertently come in contact with water.
- If a GFCI senses minimal current leakage in an electrical circuit, then it assumes a ground fault has occurred and it automatically disconnects the power.
- Power surges and electrical storms may damage GFCIs, preventing them from working properly. Monthly testing GFCIs is a good safety practice.



What is a GFCI?

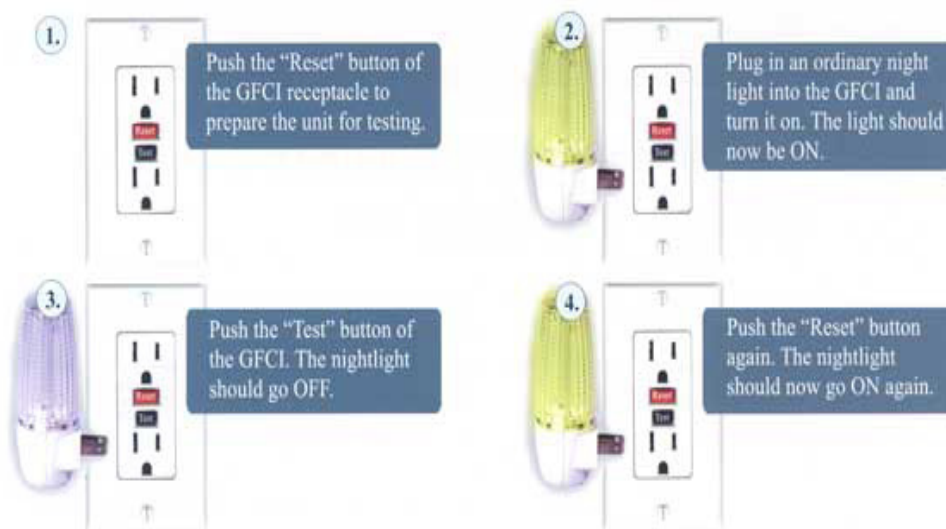
A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) is an electrical safety device that trips an electrical circuit when it detects a leakage current. This life-saving device can be an electrical receptacle, circuit breaker, or portable device. It is especially useful for cord-connected appliances and equipment that is used outdoors or near water.

If a GFCI senses minimal current leakage to ground in an electrical circuit, it assumes a ground fault has occurred. It then interrupts power fast enough to prevent serious injury from electrical shock.

GFCIs provide protection against electrical shock from ground faults or leakage currents, which occur when the electrical current flows outside of the circuit conductors.

HOW TO TEST YOUR GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTER (GFCI)

Testing Your GFCI



The nightlight should go out when the "Test" button is pushed. If the light does not go out, then the GFCI may have been improperly wired or damaged and does not offer shock protection. In this case, contact a licensed electrician to check the GFCI and correct the problem.

The **Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI)** is dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety. 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 every May, and engages in public education campaigns and media outreach to help reduce property damage, injury and death caused by electrical accidents.

