

Prevent the hazard of overloaded electrical circuits

A home is a safe haven for its residents. No matter what's going on at school or the office, many people know they can relax in comfort and safety when they arrive home at the end of a day.

Safety at home is something that can be taken for granted until it's too late. The National Fire Protection Association notes that each year more than 47,000 home fires in the United States are caused by electri-

cal failure or malfunction.

Overloaded electrical circuits are a frequent culprit in residential fires. Fortunately, overloaded circuits are preventable. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, the following are some potential indicators that circuits are overloaded.

- Flickering, blinking or dimming lights
- Frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses
- Warm or discolored wall

plates

- Cracking, sizzling or buzzing from receptacles
- Burning odor coming from receptacles or wall switches
- Mild shock or tingle from appliances, receptacles or switches.

Learning to recognize the signs of overloaded circuits is an important step in making homes safe, as the NFPA notes that home fires contribute to hundreds of deaths and more than 1,500

injuries each year. Such fires also hit homeowners in their pocketbooks, causing an estimated \$1.4 billion in property damage annually.

Prevention is another key component when safeguarding a home and its residents from fires sparked by electrical failures or malfunctions. The ESFI offers the following tips to prevent electrical overloads.

- Never use extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliances.
- All major appliances should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle outlet. Only one heat-producing appliance should be plugged into a receptacle outlet at any given time.
- Consider adding new outlets to your home. Heavy reliance on extension cords indicates that your home does not have enough outlets. Bring in a qualified

electrician to inspect your home to determine if more outlets are necessary.

- Recognize that power strips only add additional outlets; they do not change the amount of power being

received from the outlet.

Fires sparked by electrical circuit overload pose a significant threat. Thankfully, such fires are preventable. Learn more at www.esfi.org.



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