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Use Electrical Safety Awareness During Summer Storms

Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, lightning storms and high winds killed and injured thousands in 2006. Economic losses from these events, especially in the Gulf Coast region, totaled billions of dollars. The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) urges consumers to become more knowledgeable about electrical safety during and after weather disasters.

“After severe weather is gone, electrical hazards can still cause deaths and injuries,” noted Brett Brenner, ESFI president. ESFI warns consumers to beware of electrical dangers associated with downed power lines, portable electric generators and electrical wiring or appliances that have been wet. These precautions can help keep you and your family safe from electrical hazards during and after disasters:

- Take care when stepping into flooded areas—whether indoors or out. Submerged outlets, electrical cords and downed power lines can energize water, posing a lethal trap.
- Stay away from downed power lines and anything touching them.
- If you see someone who is in contact with a downed power line, do not touch the person. You could become the next victim. Instead, call 911.
- Do not drive over downed power lines.
- Have portable electric generators installed by licensed electricians to ensure it meets local electrical codes and is properly grounded.
- Keep the generator dry and do not operate it in enclosed or partially enclosed areas. Generators can produce high levels of deadly carbon monoxide very quickly; consider using a carbon monoxide detector.
- Do not overload the generator and carefully follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to help prevent electrocutions.
- Do not use electrical wiring or equipment that has been wet. A qualified service repair dealer should recondition electrical equipment; a licensed electrician can inspect electrical systems.
- To avoid lightning strikes, go indoors during electrical storms and stay away from windows.
- If outdoors during electrical storms, move to a low point. Stay away from metal items, including sports equipment, buildings, clotheslines, poles and fences. Avoid trees.
- During electrical storms, do not use corded telephones except for emergencies.
- Avoid contact with water and plumbing during electrical storms.
- Don’t forget pets during thunderstorms. Doghouses are not safe from lightning. Chained animals can easily become victims of lightning.

Visit ESFI at www.electrical-safety.org or call 703-841-3229 for more on electrical safety.

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.

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