

Seasonal Safety Reminders from ESFI

Fall Seasonal Tips

The following are some of the signs consumers can look for to address home wiring electrical hazards:

- Power outages—circuit breakers that frequently trip or fuses that need replacement
- Dim and flickering lights
- Arcs and sparks—flashes of light or showers of sparks in your electrical system
- Sizzles and buzzes—unusual sounds from your electrical system
- Overheating — overheated wires can give off an odor of hot insulation; switchplates or receptacle covers are hot to the touch, or discolored from heat buildup
- Electrical shocks — any shock, even a mild tingle, may be warning of an electrical danger
- Overrated panel — electrical panels with fuses or circuit breakers rated at higher currents than the capacity of their branch circuits
- Damaged wire insulation — cut, broken or cracked

Fall Safety Reminders:

- Safely store warm weather tools like lawn mowers and trimmers. Check cold weather tools, such as leaf and snow blowers, along with their power cords, for unusual wear and tear. Repair or replace worn tools or parts right away.
- Unplug and safely store battery chargers that won't be in use again until spring.
- Use only weatherproof electrical devices for outside activities. Protect outdoor electrical devices from moisture.
- Make sure electrical equipment that has been wet is inspected and reconditioned by a certified repair dealer.

Winter Seasonal Tips

ESFI offers the following safety tips and precautions regarding space heaters, baseboard, and in-wall heaters as you head into cooler weather:

- Keep all furniture, draperies, and other household objects at least three feet from the in-wall fan heaters and 12 inches from baseboard heaters.
- Keep portable space heaters at least three feet away from all flammable materials, such as furniture and draperies.
- Plug portable space heaters directly into the outlet; do not use an extension cord.
- If an in-wall or baseboard heater is shut off at the circuit breaker, be sure to lock or tag the circuit breaker to prevent someone from inadvertently turning it back on.
- Some portable space heaters, electric in-wall fan heaters and baseboard heaters have been subject to product recalls. Check your brand and model number and visit www.cpsc.gov for possible information about your heater.

The following tips could help avoid potentially dangerous counterfeit electrical products:

- Look for the CSA, UL or ETL-SEMKO Certification marks. If you have concerns about the marks, contact the certifier.
- Buyers should beware of bargains that seem too good to be true. Products may be cheap because they are counterfeit or defective.
- Use established vendors who purchase their goods from legitimate distributors and genuine manufacturers. Fly-by-night vendors may not be willing to grant refunds for electrical products that do not perform as they should.
- Check the warning label. It should be free of grammatical errors and not conflict with information elsewhere on the package.
- Look for the name and contact information of the manufacturer. If this information is missing, considering purchasing electrical products elsewhere. Avoid no-name products.

Spring Safety Tips

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) reminds those on the job to look up, look down, and look out for electrical safety hazards.

Avoid Outdoor Electrical Hazards at Work and Home:

- Ladders—even those made of wood—that contact a power line can prove fatal.
- Unplug outdoor tools and appliances when not in use.
- Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housing and repair or replace damaged items.
- Water does not mix with electricity. Avoid damp conditions — including wet grass — when using electricity.
- Wherever possible, use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) or purchase tools with built-in GFCI technology.

Summer Safety Tips

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) warns consumers to beware of the dangers hurricanes and floods cause when water comes in contact with electricity. ESFI offers this safety advice:

- If you see a downed power line, move away from the line and anything touching it.
- The proper way to move away from the line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. This will minimize the potential for a strong electric shock. Electricity wants to move from a high voltage zone to a low voltage zone—and it could do that through your body.
- If you see someone who is in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch the person. You could become the next victim. Call 911 instead.
- Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line by using another object such as a broom or stick. Even non-conductive materials like wood or cloth, if slightly wet, can conduct electricity and then electrocute you.
- Be careful not to put your feet near water where a downed power line is located.
- Do not drive over downed lines.
- If you are in your car and it is in contact with the downed line, stay in your car. Honk your horn for help and tell others to stay away from your vehicle.
- If you must leave your car because it's on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and avoid contact with the live car and the ground at the same time. This way you avoid being the path of electricity from the car to the earth. Shuffle away from the car.

Outdoors is the most dangerous place to be during a lightning storm. Because lightning can travel sideways for up to 10 miles, blue skies are not a sign of safety.

ESFI recommends following these guidelines to stay safe during electrical storms:

- If possible, go indoors.
- Once indoors, stay away from windows and doors.
- Do not use corded telephones except for emergencies.
- Unplug electronic equipment before the storm arrives and avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords during storms.
- Avoid contact with plumbing, including sinks, baths and faucets.
- If outdoors, go to a low point. Lightning hits the tallest object.
- Get down if you are in an exposed area.
- Stay away from trees.
- Avoid metal. Don't hold metal items, including bats, golf clubs, fishing rods, tennis rackets or tools. Avoid metal sheds, clotheslines, poles and fences.
If you feel a tingling sensation or your hair stands on end, lightning may be about to strike. Crouch down and cover your ears.
- Stay away from water. This includes pools, lakes, puddles and anything damp, such as wet poles or grass.
- Don't stand close to other people. Spread out.
- Don't forget pets during thunderstorms. Doghouses are not lightning-safe. Dogs that are chained can easily fall victim to a lightning strike.
- Victims of lightning strikes should be given CPR if necessary, and seek medical attention.

ESFI reminds everyone that electricity is a powerful tool. It can also be a lethal hazard. Better safety standards have reduced electrical hazards that cause deaths, injuries and property damage. But good safety habits are still the best prevention against electrical hazards.

For additional electrical safety information, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.electrical-safety.org or call 703-841-3229.