

## Keeping Your Home Electricity Safe

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The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends inspecting your electrical products every six months. When moving into a new home or when changing the time on your clocks, it the best time to perform this inspection as well as change the batteries in your smoke alarms.

### In All Rooms

- Check lights in each room including lamps and ceiling fixtures to ensure the right wattage for the fixture. *A bulb that is higher wattage than recommended may overheat the light fixture wiring, igniting combustible materials which could lead to a fire.*
- Are properly grounded 3-prong adapters used to attach power cords with 3-prong plugs to older 2-prong outlets? *The grounding feature provided by a 3-prong adapter for a 2-prong outlet is a safety feature designed to lessen the risk of fire or shock in case of an appliance fault. NEVER defeat the adapter's grounding feature or break the ground pin from a 3-prong plug.*
- Is any cord frayed, cracked, or otherwise damaged? *Damaged cords may have exposed live wires that can be shock and fire hazards.*
- Is any cord placed where it might be stepped on? *Cords placed in the path of traffic are tripping hazards. Cords can be damaged when stepped on, creating a fire or shock hazard.*
- Is any piece of furniture or rug resting on an electrical cord? *Heavy weight or traffic can damage cords, crushing insulation or breaking wire strands, creating a fire or shock hazard.*
- Is any cord wrapped tightly around any object? *Wrapped cords trap heat that normally escapes loose cords, which can lead to melting or weakening of insulation.*
- Are cords attached to anything with nails or wire staples? *Nails and staples can tear or crush the insulation or cut the wires inside, presenting a fire or shock hazard.*
- Are all extension cords equipped with safety covers on the unused outlets? *Children can be shocked or seriously burned when they play with uncovered outlets.*
- Check the electrical rating on appliances and extension cords. *Is any extension cord carrying more than its proper load? Too much current will cause the wires to get hot. If the cord, plug, or outlet feels warm, it may be overloaded and could be a fire hazard.*
- Is any extension cord being used on a permanent basis? *Extension cords are not as safe as permanent house wiring. Installed wiring can carry more current and is protected from accidental damage that could cause shock or fire.*



Are all outlets and switches cool to the touch? *Unusually warm outlets or switches may indicate an unsafe wiring condition exists, such as a loose electrical connection that can start a fire. (Sometimes dimmer switches may become warm during normal use).*

Do all electrical plugs fit snugly into all outlets? *Loose-fitting plugs can cause overheating and fires. A loose connection cannot carry much current without getting hot.*

Do you test all your GFCI outlets regularly? It is best to test every GFCI once a month according to the manufacturer's instructions. If you do not have the instructions, follow these procedures: Plug a light into the outlet and turn it on, press the test button, did the light go out? If not, replace the GFCI. Press the reset button. Did the light come back on? If not, replace the GFCI. *Any outlets located within 6' of a water source should be equipped with a GFCI such as in kitchens, bathrooms or laundry rooms.*

### **In the Kitchen**

Are all countertop appliances unplugged when not in use? *Unattended, plugged-in appliances may create an unnecessary risk of fire.*

### **In the Bathroom**

Are all appliances unplugged when not in use? *Even when turned off, plugged-in electrical appliances may cause a shock hazard if they fall into water.*

### **In the Bedroom**

Are all electric blankets in good condition? *Look for cracks or breaks in wiring, plugs, and connectors. Also, look for dark, charred, or frayed spots on either side of the blanket. Any of these conditions indicate damage and a potential fire hazard.*

Are electric blankets always laid out flat? *Folded blankets may overheat.*

### **In the Basement, Garage, and Workshop**

Do you periodically turn circuit breakers off and on? *Turn off the freezer, refrigerator, and air conditioner. Flip each circuit breaker off and on three times. Do this at least once a year. Circuit breakers must be exercised periodically to make sure they have not become stuck and to keep them in good working order. Appliances with compressor motors can be damaged by repeated power interruptions if you don't turn them off.*

Are all cord-connected power tools equipped with the 3-prong plugs or marked to indicate they are double insulated? *These safety features reduce the risk of electric shock and electrocution. Metal-cased electrical tools without proper grounding become more dangerous as old internal insulation wears and cracks. Consider replacing older tools lacking these safety features. At the very least, make sure to plug them into a working GFCI outlet when using them.*

