



Safety Tip Sheets



Kitchen Safety

Cooking Up Safety in the Kitchen

The kitchen is the heart of the home. It's where families gather to cook favorite recipes, share warm meals, and reconnect with each other, but it's also the location where two-thirds of all home fires start. Identify and correct potential hazards in your kitchen before someone gets hurt.

Kitchen Safety Menu:

- Keep your stove and oven clean. Clean the exhaust hood and duct over the stove regularly.
- Keep the cooking area around the stove/oven clear of combustibles, such as towels, napkins, and pot holders.
- Plug counter top appliances into GFCI-protected outlets.
- Locate all appliances away from the sink.
- Keep appliance cords away from hot surfaces like the range or toaster.
- Unplug the toaster and other counter top appliances when not in use.
- Make sure there is room behind the refrigerator for air to circulate.
- Vacuum refrigerator coils every three months to eliminate dirt buildup that can reduce efficiency and create a fire hazard.
- Even a slight shock from a major appliance can indicate an extremely hazardous wiring condition. Turn the power to the appliance off at the circuit breaker. Do not touch the appliance until it has been checked by a licensed, qualified electrician.
- Do not use electrical appliances that have been wet. Water can damage the motors in electrical appliances like freezers and refrigerators.

Safety Spotlight: GFCIs

A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) is a device designed to protect people from electrical shock and electrocution. The GFCI constantly monitors electricity flowing in a circuit, quickly switching off power to that circuit if any loss of current occurs.

GFCI receptacles are used in place of standard outlets in areas of the home where water may come into contact with electrical products, such as the bathroom, garage, kitchen, and basement.

GFCIs should be tested every month to ensure they are in working order.

Energy Saving Tip:

A toaster oven uses 1/3 as much energy as a full-sized oven. Use toaster ovens for cooking small meals.

Visit ESFI's *Virtual Home* at <http://virtualhome.esfi.org/> to learn more about home electrical safety.

Family Room Safety

Plug Into Safety in Your Family Room

The family room is an area of the home where many people go to unwind and relax, but there are certainly a lot of appliances powered there. According to the Consumer Electronics Association, the average home today has three televisions, two DVD players, at least one digital camera, one desktop computer and two cell phones. Many homes and their electrical systems were built before most modern-day home electronics and appliances were even invented. Learn to recognize and eliminate potential electrical hazards that can exist in common areas of your home.

Safety Tips:

- Make sure entertainment centers and computer equipment have plenty of space around them for ventilation.
- Extension cords are for temporary use only, and are not intended to be used as a permanent power supply.
- Do not place extension cords in high traffic areas, under carpets, or across walkways, where they pose a potential tripping hazard.
- Examine extension cords before each use. Replace cracked or damaged cords immediately.
- Use a surge protector to protect your computer and other electronic equipment from damage caused by voltage changes.
- Consider purchasing surge protectors with cable and phone jacks to provide similar protection to your phone, fax, computer modem, and television.
- Heavy reliance on power strips is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed by a licensed, qualified electrician as needed.
- Keep liquids, including drinks, away from electrical items such as televisions and computers.

Safety Spotlight: TRRs

Every year in the United States, more than 2,400 children under 10 years old are treated in hospital emergency rooms for electric shock or burn injuries caused by tampering with a wall outlet.

Tamper resistant receptacle (TRR) technology provides a simple, permanent solution to help prevent these types of childhood shock and burn injuries. TRRs look like standard wall outlets, but they are actually designed to close off the receptacle openings unless equal pressure is simultaneously applied to both sides.

Energy Saving Tip:

Use a power strip as a central turn off point for electronics, video games, and computers when not in use.

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Bedroom Safety

Wake Up to Safety in the Bedroom

The average adult sleeps almost 8 hours per night, spending at least one-third of every day in their bedroom. Unfortunately, we are often at our most vulnerable while asleep. Thirty-six percent of people killed in home fires never wake up. Take steps to make sure your bedroom is safe—you'll sleep better!

Safety Tips:

- Before installing a portable air conditioner, make sure that the electrical circuit and the outlet are able to handle the load.
- Large window A/C units should have their own separate electrical circuit so the system is not overloaded.
- Air conditioners need to be cleaned at the beginning of every season to keep them running safely and efficiently.
- Check ceiling fans regularly for a wobble, which will wear out the motor over time. To fix the wobble, turn off power to the ceiling fan, and tighten the screws.
- Replace any lamp whose cord is damaged or cracked.
- Use correct bulb wattage in fixtures. Light bulbs with wattages that are too high for the light fixture can overheat the fixture and start a fire.
- Always turn lamps off when you leave the room for an extended period of time.
- If you have a rechargeable battery, be sure to use the proper battery charger intended for the size and type of battery you have.
- Unplug battery chargers or power adapters when equipment is fully charged or is disconnected from the charger.

Safety Spotlight: Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms save lives by providing early warning of fire. Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.

For the best protection, smoke alarms should be interconnected, so that they all sound if one sounds. Battery-operated alarms can now be connected by wireless technology.

Test smoke alarms monthly by pushing the TEST button. Change smoke alarm batteries at least once a year. If an alarm chirps or beeps to indicate low batteries, change them right away.

Energy Saving Tip:

If you have a portable air conditioner, turn it off when a room will be vacant for a few hours. You'll use less energy cooling the room down later than if you had left the unit running.

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Basement Safety

Build a Foundation of Safety in the Basement

The basement is one of the most commonly ignored areas of the home. Yet, it is also where some of your most essential—and expensive—home electrical equipment is kept. Heating equipment and electrical distribution systems are two of the leading causes of home fires. You can help keep your home safe by learning the basics of how these systems work and making sure they are properly maintained.

Safety Building Blocks:

- Check the label inside the door or cover of your electrical service panel to see when your electrical system was last inspected.
- Be sure circuit breakers and fuses are correctly labeled with their amperage and what rooms, circuits or outlets they service. Use correct size and current rating for breakers/fuses.
- Increase your fire protection by having a qualified, licensed electrician replace your standard circuit breakers with AFCI breakers.
- Have your furnace cleaned and inspected annually by a licensed, qualified professional.
- Make sure all fuel-burning equipment, such as furnaces, stoves, and fireplaces, is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area.
- Lower the setting on water heater thermostats to 120° Fahrenheit or below.
- Turn off electric water heaters/turn down gas water heaters before you go away on vacation.
- Clean the dryer lint filter after each load, and keep the area around the dryer free of clutter.
- Check periodically for excessive vibration or movement when the washing machine or dryer is operating, which can put stress on electrical connections.

Safety Spotlight: AFCIs

Arcing faults are one of the major causes of the more than 51,000 fires that result from electrical problems each year. An arc fault is a dangerous electrical problem caused by damaged, overheated, or stressed electrical wiring/devices.

Arc fault circuit interrupters, or AFCIs, are devices that replace standard circuit breakers in your electrical service panel. AFCIs provide a higher level of electrical fire protection, detecting hazardous arcing conditions and shutting down the electricity before a fire can start. Test AFCIs monthly to make sure they are working properly.

Energy Saving Tip:

Heating can account for 40% of your annual household energy costs! Keeping your furnace well-maintained can increase its efficiency by more than 10%.

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