

*NFPA urges public awareness of electrical safety.*

Electrical fires continue to be a leading cause of home fires, according to a new report from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Released during National Electrical Safety Month (May), the report is a reminder for the public not to forget about electrical safety and to adhere to safety tips to help reduce the risk of home electrical fires.

“Electricity literally runs modern lifestyles by powering the amenities that so many of us depend on day to day, so fire safety is something to keep in mind whenever electricity is being used,” said Lorraine Carli, NFPA’s vice president of communications.

“There are lots of simple things each of us can do to prevent electrical fires, like keeping lighting fixtures and light bulbs away from things that can burn, and never using extension cords to plug in major appliances.”

According to the report, in 2007, electrical failure or malfunction was a factor contributing to ignition in an estimated 51,800 reported home structure fires.

Of the 2003-2007 home electrical fires, 46 percent involved some type of electrical distribution or lighting equipment.

Other leading types of equipment involved in the ignition of electrical fires were washers and dryers, fans, air conditioning equipment, space heaters, water heaters, and ranges.

Six percent of 2003-2007 home structure fires involved electrical distribution or lighting equipment as equipment involved in ignition, making it the fourth major cause of home structure fires, following behind cooking equipment, heating equipment, and intentional.

NFPA offers the following safety tips on electrical safety:

- Work on home electrical distribution or lighting equipment should only be conducted by someone qualified as an electrician.
- When buying, selling, or remodeling a home, have it inspected by a professional electrician.
- Keep lamps, light fixtures, and light bulbs away from anything that can burn, including lamp shades, furniture, bedding, curtains, clothing, and flammable or combustible gases and liquids.
- Major appliances such as refrigerators, stoves, washers, dryers, etc., should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. Never use an extension cord.

Replace cracked, damaged, and loose electrical cords.

- Extension cords are for temporary use only. Have a licensed electrician determine if additional circuits or outlets are needed.
- Consider having a qualified electrician install arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) in your home. This is a type of circuit breaker that shuts off electricity when a dangerous condition occurs.

To learn more about electrical safety, please visit <http://www.nfpa.org/electricalsafetymonth>.