



## **A Factsheet on Home Electrical Fire Prevention**

Electrical fires in our homes claim the lives of 280 Americans each year and injure 1,000 more. Some of these fires are caused by electrical system failures, but many more are caused by incorrectly installed wiring and overloaded circuits and extension cords.

The City of Dinuba Fire Department, along with the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), would like consumers to know that there are simple steps you can take to prevent the loss of life and property resulting from electrical fires.

### **The Problem**

During a typical year, home electrical problems account for 26,100 fires and \$1 billion in property losses. About half of all residential electrical fires involve electrical wiring.

December and January are the most dangerous months for electrical fires. Fire deaths are highest in winter months which call for more indoor activities and increases in lighting, heating, and appliance use. The bedroom is the leading area of fire origin for residential building electrical fires. However, electrical fires that begin in the living room/family room/den areas result in the most deaths.

### **The Cause**

- Most electrical distribution fires result from problems with "fixed wiring" such as faulty electrical outlets and old wiring. Problems with cords (such as extension and appliance cords), plugs, receptacles, and switches also cause many home electrical fires.
- Light fixtures and lamps/light bulbs are also leading causes of electrical fires.
- Many avoidable electrical fires can be traced to misuse of electric cords, such as overloading circuits, poor maintenance, and running the cords under rugs or in high traffic areas.



### **Safety Precautions**

- Routinely check your electrical appliances and wiring. Replace all worn, old or damaged appliance cords immediately. Do not try to repair them.
- Buy only appliances that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Major and small appliances should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. Never use an extension cord. Unplug small appliances when not in use.
- If an appliance has a three-prong plug, use it only in a three-slot outlet. Never force it to fit into a two-slot outlet or extension cord.
- Replace any electrical tool if it causes even small electrical shocks, overheats, shorts out or gives off smoke or sparks.
- Use only surge protectors or power strips that have internal overload protection and have the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Keep clothes, curtains, and other items that can catch fire at least three feet from all portable electric space heaters.
- Use light bulbs that match the recommended wattage on the lamp or fixture.
- Avoid putting cords where they can be damaged or pinched by furniture, under rugs and carpets, or across doorways.

- Extension cords are for temporary use only. Have a qualified electrician determine if additional circuits or wall outlets are needed.
  
- Electrical work should be done only by a qualified electrician. Call an electrician if you have any of the following:
  - Recurring problems with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers
  - A tingling feeling when you touch an electrical appliance
  - Discolored or warm wall outlets or switches
  - A burning smell or rubbery odor coming from an appliance
  - Flickering lights
  - Sparks from a wall outlet
  - Cracked or broken wall outlets

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

\*\* For more helpful safety tips, please visit the United States Fire Administration website at:  
[http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home\\_fire\\_prev/](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/)