



# CITY OF COLONIAL HEIGHTS

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**Department of Fire, EMS, & Emergency Management**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **ELECTRICAL FIRE MAJOR CAUSE OF HOME FIRES NFPA URGES AWARENESS TO REDUCE RISK**

May 1, 2009 –The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is kicking off National Electrical Safety Month (May) by reminding the public to be aware of the risks associated with the use of electricity, and providing safety tips to assist individuals in taking steps to reduce the risk of experiencing a home electrical fire.

In recent years, an average of 53,000 home electrical fires have been reported per year. These fires resulted in an average of 500 deaths, 1,400 injuries, and \$1.5 billion in direct property damage per year. One of every seven home fires was an electrical fire.

Any type of equipment that uses electricity may be involved in an electrical fire. Some type of electrical distribution equipment such as wiring, light switches, outlets, cords, and plugs or lighting equipment was involved in roughly half of the home electrical fires. There are also many home electrical fires involving air conditioners, fans, clothes dryers and appliances. "Whether you are actively flipping a switch, inserting a plug, or simply

enjoying all the electric-powered appliances in your home, the risk of fire may not be on your mind,” said Lorraine Carli, NFPA’s vice president of communications. “Most electrical fires can be easily avoided. The first step in preventing them is to be aware of the danger, the second is to learn the rules of fire safety and then put them into practice.” NFPA offers the following safety tips. To learn more about electrical safety, visit [www.nfpa.org/electricalsafetymonth](http://www.nfpa.org/electricalsafetymonth).

- *Replace or repair loose or damaged cords on all electrical devices.*
- *Avoid running extension cords across doorways or under carpets.*
- *In homes with small children, unused wall sockets and extension-cord receptacles should have plastic safety covers.*
- *Consider having additional circuits or outlets added by a qualified electrician so you do not have to use extension cords.*
- *Follow the manufacturers’ instructions for plugging an appliance into a receptacle outlet.*
- *Avoid overloading outlets. Plug only one high-wattage appliance into each receptacle outlet at a time.*
- *If outlets or switches feel warm, shut off the circuit and have them checked by an electrician.*
- *When possible, avoid the use of "cube taps" and other devices that allow the connection of multiple appliances into a single receptacle.*
- *Place lamps on level surfaces, away from things that can burn and use bulbs that match the lamp's recommended wattage.*

Electrical fires tend to happen more frequently in older homes. The Fire Protection Research Foundation conducted the [Residential Electrical System Aging Research Project](#) (2008) to study how aging and installation quality of components in home electrical systems impact fire safety. The project involved harvesting from 30 homes from across the U.S. ranging in age from 30 to 110 years. More information on hidden electrical hazards and a link to the Foundation’s report are available at [www.nfpa.org/electricalsafetymonth](http://www.nfpa.org/electricalsafetymonth).

In addition to serving as a source for public education materials on electrical safety and research findings on fires involving electricity, NFPA has a long history of commitment to electrical safety as developer and publisher of the National Electrical Code® (NEC®) since 1911. The NEC sets the standard for the safe use of electricity and electrical installations. It is the most widely used code for the built-environment in the world.

NFPA has been a worldwide leader in providing fire, electrical, building, and life safety to the public since 1896. The mission of the international nonprofit organization is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

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Information provided by National Fire Protection Association.