



Electrical Fire Safety



www.ocfa.org

Electrical fires kill hundreds of Americans each year and injure thousands more. Although some of these fires are caused by electrical system failures and appliance defects, many are caused by misuse and poor maintenance of electrical appliances, incorrectly installed wiring and overloaded circuits and extension cords. Most of these incidents can be prevented by following simple electrical fire safety rules.

Electrical Wiring

Home electrical fires are often the result of improper installation or maintenance by do-it-yourselfers. Common errors include:

- 🔌 use of improperly rated devices;
- 🔌 faulty electrical outlets;
- 🔌 old or defective wiring;
- 🔌 misuse of electric cords;
- 🔌 overloaded circuits;
- 🔌 running cords under rugs or in high traffic areas.



Extension Cords

The Consumer Product Safety Council estimates that about 3,300 residential fires originate in extension cords each year, killing 50 people and injuring about 270 others. Guidelines for extension cord use include the following:

- 🔌 Use extension cords only when necessary and only on a temporary basis.
- 🔌 Don't overload extension cords by plugging in appliances that draw off more watts than the rating of the cord.
- 🔌 Use special, heavy duty extension cords for high wattage appliances such as air conditioners, portable electric heaters, and freezers.
- 🔌 Never place an extension cord where it is likely to be damaged by heavy furniture or foot traffic.
- 🔌 When using outdoor equipment, use only extension cords labeled for outdoor use.

Safety Precautions

The Orange County Fire Authority provides the following safety tips to assist you in preventing the loss of life and property resulting from electrical fires:

- ✔️ Routinely check your electrical appliances and wiring. Replace all worn, old or damaged cords or appliances immediately.
- ✔️ Unplug small appliances (toasters, coffeemakers, etc.) when they're not in use.
- ✔️ Use surge protectors with on/off switches and circuit breakers instead of multi-plug adapters.
- ✔️ Don't run cords under carpets or across doorways, and don't pinch cords against walls or furniture.
- ✔️ 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.
- ✔️ Allow adequate space around electronic components such as computers and stereo systems to prevent overheating.
- ✔️ Never overload extension cords or wall sockets.
- ✔️ Use safety closures to "child proof" electrical outlets.



Nationwide, electrical failures or malfunctions result in an average of 52,500 home fires each year.

For More Information

Orange County Fire Authority
(714) 573-6200
www.ocfa.org

U.S. Fire Administration
www.usfa.dhs.gov

National Fire Protection Association
www.nfpa.org

United States Fire Administration
www.usfa.dhs.gov

Consumer Product Safety Council
www.cpsc.gov