



Search



[Home](#) > [Research & Reports](#) > [Fact sheets](#) > [Electrical safety](#) > [Electrical safety in the home](#)



Electrical safety in the home

In 1999-2002, electrical distribution equipment accounted for one out of 12 reported home fires and one out of 14 associated civilian deaths.

Electrical distribution equipment includes all components of the building electrical distribution system as well as light fixtures, lamps, light bulbs, cords and plugs.

Facts & figures

- There were an estimated 32,000 home structure fires per year associated with electrical distribution equipment fires between the years 1999-2002. These fires resulted in 220 civilian deaths, 950 civilian injuries and \$674 million in direct property damage per year.
- Wiring, switches, receptacles and outlets were the equipment involved in ignition in 45% of the reported home structure fires involving electrical distribution equipment.
- Extension cord fires outnumbered fires beginning with attached or unattached power cords by more than two-to-one.

Source: NFPA's One-Stop Data Shop

Safety tips:

- Replace or repair loose or frayed cords on all electrical devices.
- Avoid running extension cords across doorways or under carpets.
- In homes with small children, electrical outlets should have plastic safety covers.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for plugging an appliance into a receptacle outlet.
- Avoid overloading outlets. Consider plugging 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.

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