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May is National Electrical Safety Month

Tips for Electrical Hazard Prevention.

Electrical hazards have a tendency to remain hidden until it's too late to avoid disaster. Don't let the small cost of prevention stand in the way of protecting your family and your property. There are many things you can inspect on your own to ensure electrical safety in your home.

- Check **electrical outlets** for loose fitting plugs that can shock or be a fire hazard. Replace missing or broken wall plates so that the inner wiring components are not exposed. If you have young children, make sure safety covers are used on unused outlets. Make sure outlets are not overloaded with too many appliance plugs.
- Check the **cords of the appliances** in your home as well as the plugs and connectors. Make sure that they are not frayed, cracked or damaged; placed under rugs or carpets, resting on furniture; or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple cords to walls, floors or any other objects.
- **Extension cords** should be used on a temporary basis. Have additional outlets installed where you need them instead of relying on extension cords and power strips. If you are using extension cords, make sure that they have safety closures to protect young children from shock hazards or mouth burn injuries. Never use an indoor extension cord for outdoor use.
- Check **circuit breakers** to make sure that the fuses are properly rated for the circuit that they are protecting. If you do not know what the correct rating is, have a qualified electrician identify and label the correct size to be used. If you are replacing a fuse, make sure it is replaced with the same size as the one being removed.
- Check **light bulbs** and appliances to make sure the wattage matches fixture requirements. Make sure to replace bulbs that have higher wattage than recommended. Additionally, the bulb should be screwed in securely to prevent overheating.
- If an **appliance** repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, immediately unplug, repair or replace it.
- Be sure to check outdoor connections and appliances as well. Inspect these appliances or tools for frayed cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housings.
- Check for or install **ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs)**. A GFCI is an inexpensive electrical device that shuts off power instantly if there is a problem. It's estimated that more than two-thirds of the roughly 300 electrocutions occurring each year in and around the home could be prevented if GFCIs were installed in household branch circuits. Installation of the device could also prevent thousands of burn and electric shock injuries each year. Make sure that GFCIs are installed in all 'wet' areas of the home inside and out—the kitchen, bathrooms, workshop, basement, garage and outdoor areas where water and electricity have the opportunity to come into contact. Test GFCIs monthly to insure they are working properly.