

DO-IT-YOURSELF ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Each year, thousands of people in the United States are critically injured and electrocuted as a result of electrical fires, accidents, electrocution in their own homes.

The current economic downturn has inspired more homeowners to tackle do-it-yourself projects than ever before. Faced with declining home values and aging properties, homeowners may choose not to pay for the services of a licensed electrician.

However, most do not have the training or experience needed to safely perform home electrical work, increasing the risk of immediate injuries and electrocutions and potentially introducing new dangers into the home.

Working with electricity requires thorough planning and extreme care, and cutting corners can be a costly mistake.

Safety Tips

ESFI strongly recommends hiring a qualified, licensed electrician to perform any electrical work in your home. However, if you do decide to do-it-yourself, consider the following important safety tips before undertaking any home electrical project:

- Make an effort to learn about your home electrical system so that you can safely navigate and maintain it.
- Never attempt a project that is beyond your skill level. Knowing when to call a professional may help prevent electrical fires, injuries, and fatalities.
- Always turn off the power to the circuit that you plan to work on by switching off the circuit breaker in the main service panel.
- Be sure to unplug any lamp or appliance before working on it.
- Test the wires before you touch them to make sure that the power has been turned off.
- Never touch plumbing or gas pipes when performing a do-it-yourself electrical project.



Facts and Statistics

- The U.S. home improvement market nearly doubled in size between 1995 and 2005 to \$280 billion a year, according to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University.
- Over the same period of time, emergency rooms reported ever increasing numbers of visits due to injuries from home workshop equipment. Many of these homeowners were critically injured while attempting to perform home electrical work themselves.
- The most recent data from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission shows that there are nearly 400 electrocutions in the United States each year.
- Approximately 15 percent of electrocutions are related to consumer products. Wiring hazards, including damaged or exposed wiring and household wiring, accounted for nearly 14 percent of these deaths.
- Electrical outlets cause nearly 4,000 injuries every year.
- Electrical failure accounted for 89 percent of electrical fires in residential buildings between 2003-2005 (U.S. Fire Administration)
- Each year, more than 19,700 people are injured by ceiling fans that are improperly mounted or incorrectly sized.