

Electrical safety

Electrical distribution equipment (i.e., wiring, switches, outlets, cords and plugs, fuse and circuit breaker boxes, lighting fixtures and lamps) was the third leading cause of home fires and the second leading cause of fire deaths in the United States between 1994 and 1998.

Facts & figures

- There were 38,300 reported home electrical fires in 1998, resulting in 284 deaths, 1,184 injuries and \$668.8 million in direct property damage.
- The statistics below are based on annual averages from 1994-98:
 - Ground fault or short circuit was the leading cause of electrical distribution fires.
 - Fixed wiring caused one-third of home electrical distribution fires.
 - Cords and plugs caused 17% of home electrical distribution fires and 28% of related deaths.

Source: NFPA's U.S. Home Product Report, Appliances and Equipment Involved in Fires, January 2002.

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.