

NEMA Launches AFCI Safety Web Site

There's a new online resource available on the latest in electrical circuit protection technology, thanks to the Low-Voltage Distribution Equipment Section (LVDE) of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), Rosslyn, Va. The new Web site (www.AFCIsafety.org), launched in early May, is devoted to educating homeowners, electrical contractors, and anyone involved in home construction about arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs).

Getting up to speed on this topic is more important than ever, given the fact that anticipation of the controversial expansion of AFCIs will become a reality in the 2008 National Electrical Code (NEC). Revised wording in 210.12 will require combination-type AFCI protection for all 15A and 20A, single-phase, 120V circuits in dwelling units by Jan. 1, 2008. (The combination-type AFCI detects both parallel and series arcing at lower current levels than its predecessors.)

Through this Web site, NEMA hopes to accomplish the following objectives:

- Increase the level of awareness of AFCI technology and its uses in residential applications.
- Inform about the differences between branch/feeder AFCIs, combination AFCIs, and GFCI devices.
- Provide information related to AFCIs' preventive aspects of arcing faults and their links to fire safety.

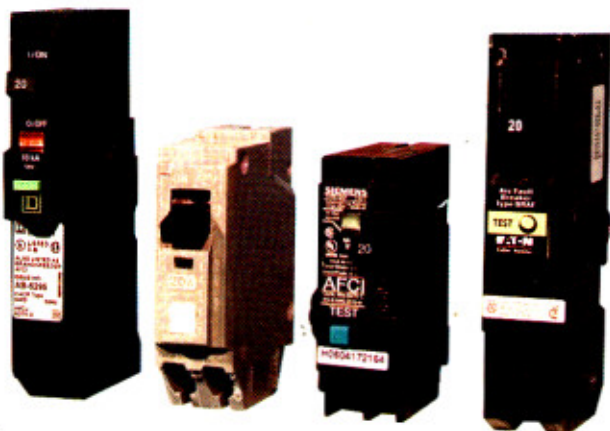
- Highlight proper installation and operation of AFCI devices.

The site offers a variety of educational resources on AFCI technology, including specific product information, definitions of the latest NEC requirements, a Q&A section, expert endorsements and testimonials, and links to Web sites of AFCI supporters and manufacturers. Visitors can also download brochures and view presentations highlighting the technology's safety

benefits, its installation and use, and the overall impact AFCIs may have on the residential construction industry.

"The new Web site is NEMA's way to make homeowners, builders, and electrical contractors aware of the safety benefits that AFCIs provide," says Gerard Winstanley, LVDE technical program manager for NEMA. "Safety needs to be the No. 1 priority in home construction, and the expanded NEC requirements for AFCIs support this important safety measure."

AFCIs are endorsed by the National Fire Protection Association, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the Electrical Safety Foundation International, and other organizations. Although there are still those in the industry who oppose the expansion of AFCI requirements in the home, the CPSC estimates that AFCI protection in homes nationwide could prevent more than 50% of an estimated 67,800 home fires each year.



SHOCKING STAT OF THE MONTH

Percentage of contractors responding to the "2006 Construction Industry Annual Financial Survey" that named "shortage of trained field help" as the No. 1 challenge they expect to face in the next five years. This figure was up from 31% for the same category in 2005.

49%

Source: Construction Financial Management Association