residential systems

News

NEMA EDUCATES ABOUT HOME ELECTRICAL FIRES

By
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Rosslyn, VA--The Low Voltage Distribution Equipment Section (LVDE) of the National Electrical Manufacturer's Association (NEMA) has published a white paper analyzing the impact of home electrical fires. It discusses the socio-economic impact that home electrical fires have on homeowners and fire-fighting professionals, and emphasizes the importance of safety education among homeowners, builders, electrical contractors, and others involved in home construction. The paper also reviews the potential effect that arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) may have on reducing the risk of an electrical fire.

"The tragic loss of human life and injuries resulting from home electrical fires is real, stressing the importance of safety as the number-one priority in home construction," said Gerard Winstanley, LVDE technical program manager for NEMA. "A key step in this process is for builders, electrical contractors, and others involved in home construction to educate homeowners about potentially life-saving tools. We believe this white paper will help serve as a means to do so."

Recent data from the United States Fire Administration (USFA) show that home electrical problems are responsible for an estimated 67,800 fires every year, resulting in 485 deaths, 2,300 injuries and more than $868 million in residential property loss. In addition to the significant consequences for the homeowners, electrical fires affect the lives of firefighters who risk injury and death fighting blazes caused by electrical problems. Each year, more than 23,000 firefighters are injured or killed battling residential fires.

While smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, and emergency safety ladders increase the likelihood that a family will escape injury from an electrical fire, other potentially life-saving technology, such as AFCIs, can keep fires from igniting.

AFCIs were developed in response to an identified electrical problem that causes home fires, and are endorsed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the Electrical Safety Foundation International, and other prominent organizations. According to CPSC estimates, AFCI protection in homes could prevent more than 50 percent of electrical fires nationwide. The 2005 National Electrical Code® currently requires that AFCIs be installed in bedroom power and lighting circuits in new homes, but the 2008 NEC® proposes to expand AFCI requirements to circuits throughout new homes.

The white paper can be found at www.AFCIsafety.org, along with additional educational resources, expert endorsements and testimonials, and links to AFCI supporters and manufacturers.