Protect Your Home from Electrical Fires

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Each year, electrical fires kill nearly 500 people and account for about $868 million dollars in property loss. But officials said you can protect your family and home with a few simple precautions.

Five-year-old Brazzon Metzler woke from his nap because a fire that broke out in an electrical outlet just above his bed. He alerted his dad, who managed to put the fire out before things worsened. His dad, Tony Metzler, knew the cause of this fire was electrical.

With the holiday months upon us, electrical fires are all too common. Metzler believes the fire at his home started when a heating unit caused an overload in the circuit. But officials said proper use of the device could have prevented it.

If you need to use an electrical heater, experts said it's best to purchase an extension cord that can handle the heater's wattage. They recommend outdoor cords, which run about $5-25. While they're a little more heavy-duty, experts said they can save lives.

Officials said too many plugs in circuits and power strips also increase the risk for electrical fires. They recommend replacing your old circuit breakers with ones that will automatically shut off if the system gets too hot.

Firefighters said the proper use and upkeep of electrical items is something everyone should take seriously. "The ultimate danger is we loose a life in a fire," said Lt. Steve Himes of the Elkins Fire Department. "We try to educate the public to take the human error out of that."

And as for Tony Metzler, he said this experience is a lesson learned. "Most people think, 'Oh, I'm fine, my house is cool'," Metzler explained, "but you just never know."

If you have any questions regarding the safety of your home, just call your local fire department or certified electrician.

http://www.wdtv.com/index.php/component/content/article/46-local-news/271-protect-your-home-from-electrical-fires