

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

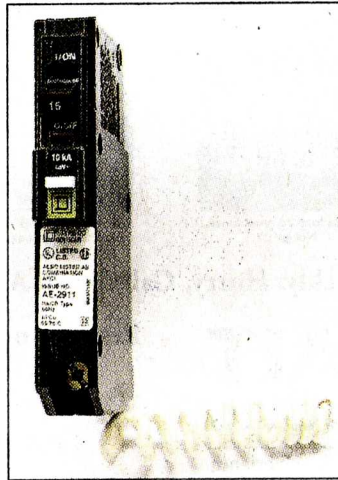
Builders fight new circuit breaker rule

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STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH - In January, new homes will be required to have a special circuit breaker that can prevent electrical fires.

But a move is under way to repeal the new requirement because homebuilders say the device is an unnecessary precaution that will add a few hundred dollars to the sale price of a new home.

Supporters say the homebuilders are risking the safety of North Carolina residents for devices that would add as little as \$60 to the cost of a smaller home. Even at the higher cost estimates used by home builders, a few hundred dollars is worth preventing a house fire, they say.



Arc fault breakers detect small current fluctuations.

STAFF PHOTO BY CHUCK LIDDY

"It all comes down to the value of a single life," said Kim Reiterer, a Charlotte electrical engineer and member of the Building Code Council, a state body that will decide whether to require the devices. "If we're not careful, this will be changed, and North Carolina homeowners will lose out."

On the other side of the debate, Mack Nixon, a Perquimans County homebuilder and member of the Building Code Council, said modern electrical codes already make homes safe from many of the risks the circuit breakers are designed to guard against. Add the cost of the circuit breakers to other new building code requirements, Nixon said, and the price

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