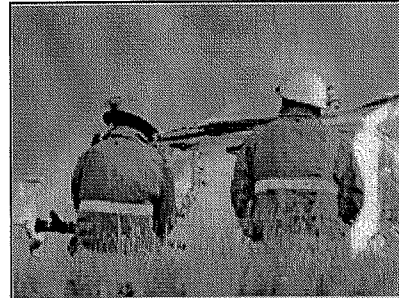


# Old Home Wiring

Each year, home electrical problems account for an estimated 53,600 fires. These fires cause more than 500 deaths, injure 1,400 people, and account for \$1.4 billion in property damage. Many of these fires occur in aging homes. According to a study conducted by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the frequency of electrically related fires is disproportionately high in homes more than 40 years old.

**Today, we expect more from our aging homes.** The lifespan of a home in the United States is continuing to increase. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the average age of a home has jumped from 30 years in 1997 to 35 years in 2005. In addition, with the advent of new technology and electronics our use of electricity in our homes is constantly increasing. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, average monthly energy consumption by household has increased from 830 kWh in 1993 to 920 kWh in 2006. The result of these two trends is that greater demands are being put on older and antiquated home electrical systems.

**According to a report conducted by Underwriters Laboratory,** electrical problems in older homes can be attributed to a number of factors, including: inadequate and overburdened electrical systems, reinsulated walls and ceilings burying wiring, misuse of extension cords and makeshift circuit extensions, worn-out wiring devices not being replaced, poorly done electrical repairs, socioeconomic considerations



In addition, the **Fire Protection Research Foundation** recently issued a first-of-its kind report to assess the electrical risks and hazards found in many older homes in the United States.

The **Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI)** recommends that homeowners have their homes inspected by a qualified licensed electrician if:

- The home is 40 or more years old

- The home is 10 or more years old that has had major renovation, an addition or major new appliance

You are the new owner of a previously owned home

resulting in unsafe installations, defeated or compromised overcurrent protection.

**The following are signs of wiring electrical hazards commonly found in aging homes:**

- Circuit breakers that frequently trip or fuses that often need replacement
  - Dim and/or flickering lights
- Arcs and sparks flashes of light or shower of sparks anywhere in your electrical system
- Sizzles and buzzes unusual sounds from your electrical system
  - Overheating overheated wires giving off an odor of hot insulation; switch plates or receptacle covers are hot to the touch or discolored from heat buildup
- Electrical shocks. Any shock, even a mild tingle, may be warning of an electrical danger
  - Damaged wire insulation cut, broken or cracked insulation
- Overrated panel electrical panels with fuses or circuit breakers rated at higher currents than the capacity of their branch circuits.

**If you observe any of these signs in your home, call in a licensed electrician to inspect its wiring.**