

## Wisconsin Reinsurance Corporation

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### Bad Wires, Start Fires

- Hidden Electrical Hazards
- Safety Doesn't Just Happen

#### Sources:

National Fire Protection Association  
[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

Electrical Fire Safety Foundation  
[www.electrical-safety.org](http://www.electrical-safety.org)

National Electric Manufacturers Association  
[www.afcisafety.org](http://www.afcisafety.org)

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## Bad Wires, Start Fires



Electricity is a powerful tool. But it can also be lethal. It is blamed for thousands of deaths, injuries and over \$1 billion in property damage each year. What some may think of as “minor” electrical problems in older homes can lead to a dangerous fire.

### Hidden Electrical Hazards

Did you know older homes can have serious hidden electrical hazards and that the Midwest region has the highest house fire death rate per capita? A recent, first of its kind study, looked “behind the walls” of older homes and found hazards such as: worn out wiring, inadequate and overburdened wire & outlets, excessive extension cords, buried wire in reinsulated walls and ceilings, improper or missing ground wires, and improper electrical repairs. They are commonly found in homes with 60 amp electrical service (or less) and do not meet industry safety standards. These hazards can cause fires inside the walls that spread rapidly before being detected, making them deadly and devastating. There are affordable options available to reduce the hazards. For example, an Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter (AFCI) will detect a spark from a wire inside the wall and shut off power preventing a fire. Standard breakers do not provide this protection.



### SAFETY DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN

Industry safety standards are the best prevention against electrocution and fires. Consider the following safety tips to reduce your risk of injury or damage:

If your home is 40 years old or older, have a licensed electrician or electrical inspector check the wiring and distribution system. Update all worn or damaged electrical components to meet the current safety standards.

Flickering lights, tripped circuit breakers, blown fuses, warm electrical components, arcs, sparks, sizzles, buzzes or unusual odor near a switch, receptacle or lighting fixture are signs of a problem. If you suspect any electrical problems, turn off the circuit and have the electrical system checked.

Do not overload outlets. Limit the use of extension cords. They are intended for temporary use only.

Do not use extension cords with space heaters or air conditioners. Make sure your space heater will automatically shut off if tipped over.

Install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) breakers on all bathroom, kitchen and exterior outlets to reduce shock hazards.

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