

**For Immediate Release
October 2, 2008**

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The Electrical Safety Foundation International Recognizes National Fire Prevention Month

Arlington, VA – To recognize October as National Fire Prevention Month, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (“ESFI”) has partnered with fire safety organizations nationwide to help homeowners and occupants to identify and correct electrical fire hazards in their homes.

Home electrical fires cause more than 500 deaths, 1,400 injuries, and \$1.4 billion in property damage each year. According to a report recently released by the U.S. Fire Administration, fire departments across the United States responded to more than 412,000 home fires in 2006 – a staggering increase of more than 16,000 fires from the previous year. Sadly, the majority of electrical fires were caused by problems that could have been easily prevented.

“Homeowners often take their home’s electrical system for granted,” explains Brett Brenner, president of ESFI. “There are definitely steps that can be taken to prevent electrical fires before they occur.”

The potential risk of home electrical fires has escalated as both the life expectancy and the energy consumption of the average home have increased in recent years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one-half of all homes in the United States were built before 1973. This means that the majority of these homes were constructed before many of today’s common household appliances and standard electronics, such as electric can openers, hair dryers, and computers, became common.

“As each year goes by Americans are using more energy in their homes,” notes Brenner. “Many homes and electrical systems in the U.S. are simply being overburdened leading to fire-related fatalities and injuries.”

To combat the issue of home electrical fires, ESFI is providing homeowners with a checklist that outlines simple steps for identifying common dangers and preventing electrical home fires. The Foundation will also be working to educate occupants of older homes on the development of newer fire prevention technology such as Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters, or AFCIs. These advanced electronic circuit breakers that detect dangerous conditions in a home’s wiring and cut off power to the circuit before a fire ignites.

Brenner hopes that the foundation’s efforts will help to raise public awareness and encourage people to recognize warning signs that may be present in their homes, such as circuit breakers that trip repeatedly or light switches that make crackling sounds. As an additional precaution, ESFI recommends that homeowners make sure that there are working smoke alarms in every room of the house and that fire escape plans have been practiced in case of an emergency.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is the leading authority on electrical safety issues. Our mission is to reduce electrically-related deaths and injuries through public education that keeps electrical safety at the forefront in people’s mind. ESFI provides the general public, school children, and the workforce with the resources necessary to aid in the prevention of deadly electrical accidents. For additional information about ESFI and Fire Prevention Month 2008, visit www.electrical-safety.org.

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