OPWDD HEALTH & SAFETY ALERT!

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Electrical Fire Safety- Tripped Circuit Breakers:

Circuit Breakers are switches made to protect your electric circuits from being damaged by electrical overloads or short circuiting. It's important to understand that the circuit breaker is a safety device. Switching the circuit back on without investigating what caused it to trip can become costly in the long run; and in many cases, extremely dangerous. For this reason, **if a breaker has tripped, contact your Maintenance Department.** The circuit breaker is tripping for a reason, and needs to be checked and tested before it is turned back on.

Many of us have experienced tripped circuit breakers at some point in our homes, yet instead of asking ourselves, "**Why did the breaker trip?**" we reset the breaker without much thought. Before flipping the switch back over to the "ON" position, it's important to understand why the breaker tripped in the first place. Two of the main reasons that breakers trip are:

- **Overloaded circuits:** Often times, when there are too many appliances plugged into an electrical circuit, the wiring reaches unsafe heat levels due to pulling more electricity through the circuit than it is designed to accommodate. That's when the circuit breaker trips, shutting off everything that is plugged in to that circuit in order to prevent overheating and reducing the risk of fire. This often happens in older homes, where the wiring was not designed to withstand the power of modern appliances.

- **Electrical shorts:** Other times, a tripped breaker can happen as a result of an electrical short. Common causes of electrical shorts in the home include damaged or worn out appliances, faulty wiring, aging wiring in older homes, or damage from rodents or other animals chewing through the wires. Because of the large range of possible causes, diagnosing an electrical short can be difficult. Electrical shorts pose a serious fire hazard, and should not be ignored.

In summary, tripped breakers are a safety issue which should not be ignored.

Additional information on Electrical and other Fire Safety issues can be found at:

New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control: http://www.dhses.ny.gov/ofpc

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):
http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files//PDF/Public%20Education/Electrical_Safety_Tips.pdf