

Subject: Preventing Summertime Electrical Hazards

July 2012

The long days of summer bring hot and humid weather to many parts of the state. Higher temperatures increase the need for cooling indoors all day long, and increased electrical use during the summer elevates the risk of fire in homes involving overloaded and/or damaged electrical systems.

The Office of Physical Plant and Safety Services would like to remind everyone to be aware of the added stress placed on a home's electrical system during summer months, and to take steps to keep everyone safe.

Overloaded wiring can overheat due to the increased loads required to run the appliances typically found in today's homes. If the wiring is deteriorating or crumbling it can lead to damaged insulation, putting the system at risk for fire.

To help protect the individuals we serve and your fellow employees, watch for these warning signs:

- Lights often flicker, blink or dim momentarily
- Circuit breakers trip or fuses blow frequently
- Cords or wall plates are warm to the touch or discolored
- Crackling, sizzling or buzzing is heard from outlets

If you have any of these conditions present, please do not attempt to address them on your own, instead you should contact your physical plant or safety office immediately.

Never use an extension cord for air conditioners or fans, and never run extension cords behind baseboards or beneath carpets or furniture. If several electrical items are located in close proximity, such as with computer equipment, use an approved surge protector. Be sure to avoid overloading the electrical circuit, as this can create a fire hazard.

There should never be more than one high energy consumption appliance such as an air conditioner, a microwave, or a refrigerator on a single circuit. If you are unsure how many appliances you have per circuit, contact your physical plant office for assistance.

No matter the season, we should all remain vigilant and continually check for electrical hazards such as cracked or fraying electrical cords, overloaded outlets and circuits, and improper wattage light bulbs in lamps and/or light fixtures. For additional information, please contact OPWDD's Office of Physical Plant and Safety Services at 518-474-9897.