



Contact:

David O'Dowd
Manning Selvage & Lee
Phone: (312) 861-5216
Fax: (312) 861-5233
david.o'dowd@mslpr.com

Tim Trush
Schneider Electric, North American Operating Division
Phone: (847) 397-2600
timothy-m.trush@us.schneider-electric.com

www.us.schneider-electric.com

AFCIs Good Defense Against Electrical Home Fires

May is National Electrical Safety Month and consumers can help prevent electrical home fires with arc fault circuit interrupters

Palatine, IL (May 1, 2005) – More than 73,000 family dwelling electrical system fires occur each year, which is why National Electrical Safety month in May is prime time for homeowners to learn about the important role arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) play in preventing home fires, according to Schneider Electric's North American Operating Division.ⁱ

An AFCI senses the particular signature of an arc, where electricity has to jump a gap and acts immediately to shut off the circuit, preventing an electrical fire hazard. An arc can be caused by cracked, broken or damaged electrical insulation on wiring, either within the walls or from a damaged cord. If combustible material is nearby, then the potential for an electrical fire exists. More than 50 percent of home electrical fires are attributed to arcing, leading to nearly 600 deaths, over 2,000 injuries and \$1 billion in property damage annually.ⁱⁱ These arcs often occur behind walls, where they can cause fires that spread rapidly undetected by smoke alarms.

"In 2002, a modification to the National Electrical Code took effect requiring that AFCIs be installed in bedroom dwellings in new construction, which is a step in the right direction," said David D. Petratis, president and CEO of the Schneider



Schneider Electric
North American Operating Division
1415 South Roselle Road
Palatine, IL 60067-7399
Tel. (1) 847-397-2600
Fax (1) 847-925-7271
www.us.schneider-electric.com

Electric North American Operating Division. “The arcing fault problem is also prevalent in homes constructed before the NEC provision took effect. We highly recommend that owners of such homes consult with their electrical contractor to determine the need for these potentially live saving devices.”

Installation of AFCIs should be completed by qualified electrical contractors or electricians. However, one may test the AFCI by simply pushing the “test” button on the AFCI circuit breaker. The test button imposes a simulated arcing condition on the circuit and the AFCI should be able to detect it. If it detects the arc fault, the circuit breaker will open. If it does not open, the AFCI should be replaced.

An AFCI is vital to a home’s safety because conventional circuit breakers and fuses only respond to overloads and short circuits whereas an AFCI can prevent arcing conditions produced from erratic current flow.

The Schneider Electric North American Operating Division is best known for its flagship Square D brand of electrical equipment including residential load centers, surge breakers, AFCIs and other distribution and control products. The company is a leading sponsor of the Electrical Safety Foundation, which provides helpful information on residential electrical safety at <http://www.esfi.org>.

###

Schneider Electric North American Operating Division

Headquartered in Palatine, Ill., the North American Operating Division of Schneider Electric had sales of \$2.6 billion (U.S.) in 2004. The North American Operating Division is one of four operating divisions of Schneider Electric, headquartered in Paris, France, and markets the Square D, Telemecanique and Merlin Gerin brand products to customers in the United States, Canada and Mexico. In the United States, Schneider Electric is best known by its flagship Square D brand, with Telemecanique becoming increasingly known in the industrial control and automation markets and supported by many Square D distributors. For 100 years, Square D has been a market-leading brand of electrical distribution and industrial control products, systems and services. Schneider Electric is a global electrical industry leader with 2004 sales of approximately \$12.8 billion (U.S.). Visit Schneider Electric on the Internet at:

- Corporate – <http://www.us.schneider-electric.com>
- Telemecanique Products – <http://www.us.telemecanique.com>
- Square D Products – <http://www.us.squared.com>
- Merlin Gerin Products – <http://www.us.merlengerin.com>

ⁱ “State Fire Marshals say, ‘Better to use your head than your feet’ to prevent electrical fires,” National Association of State Fire Marshals press release, http://www.firemarshals.org/issues/home/fire_docs/press_release_9-11.pdf.

ⁱⁱ “ESFI Encourages Consumers To Install AFCIs,” August 3, 2004, Electrical Safety Foundation International press release, <http://www.esfi.org/news/isub.php?i0=news&i1=releases&i2=20040804.html>.