

Catholic Mutual Canada - CARES

Parish Electrical Safety – Constant and Consistent Awareness

The 2006 Ontario Electrical Safety Report published by the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) includes the following statistics.

- Between 1998 and 2005 78% of all Ontario fires occurred in residential properties.
- Between 1998 and 2005 67% of all Ontario fires were caused by an electricity-fueled source.
- Between 1998 and 2006 17% of all Ontario fires were caused by panels, fuses and circuit boards, 22% were caused by extension cords, and 23% were caused by copper wiring.
- Between 1998 and 2006 23% of all electrical fires were caused by improper installations.

Electrical fires can be avoided by recognizing electrical hazard early warning signs and making proactive quick fixes to a host of electrical concerns.

Potential Electrical Hazard Early Warning Signs

- Fuses need replacement or circuit breakers need resetting frequently.
- Electrical panel contains fuses or circuit breakers rated at higher currents than the recommended capacity of their branch circuits.
- Federal Pioneer electrical panels that use NC015 or NCO15CP circuit breakers.
- Lights that flicker or dim.
- Short bursts of bright flashes of light or showers of sparks from any part of the electrical system.
- Unusual sizzles or buzzes that can be heard from the electrical system.
- Warm, not hot to the touch or discolored switch plates, wall outlet covers, cords or plugs.
- Electrical outlets that test for open ground or reversed polarity.
- Wires that are cut, broken or have cracked insulation.
- Knob and tube wiring in use for all or a portion of the building.
- Aluminum wiring in use for all or a portion of the building.
- Currently using a 60 amp electrical panel that supplies service to the building.
- Existing lightning protection systems that are improperly grounded.
- Lightning protection systems are not installed.

If any, or a number of these early warning signs exist on Arch/Diocesan property it is recommended the location have the problem investigated by a licensed Electrical Safety Authority (www.esasafe.com) contractor. The ESA website has an easy link to provide information to the public, including a list of licensed contractors in your area.

Electrical Hazard Quick Fixes

By taking a few minutes a representative from the parish can tour the Diocesan property and answer all of these questions. If necessary a quick fix can rectify the deficiency..

- Is the electrical panel cover currently installed?
- Has an Electrical Safety Authority contractor approved the installation of the wired smoke detector?
- Are all circuits on all electrical panel's marked as to the areas of the building each circuit services?
- Does the electrical panel have any open breaker slots that require plastic covers?
- Are all electrical outlets within 1 meter of all sinks in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry rooms equipped with GFCI protection?
- Are light weight extension cords with multi outlet receptacles presently being used?
- Are extension cords placed under carpeted areas or heavy furniture?
- Are permanently installed extension cords used to connect electric devices to wall outlets?
- Are any of the extension cords currently in use damaged and/or frayed?
- Do any of the extension cords in use have the third prong (ground) removed?
- Do any of the extension cords have loose prongs or have splits in the plastic casing (cord jacket)?
- Are 3-way or 6-way outlet adapters used for the purpose of connecting more devices to a single wall outlet?
- Is the sound system in the church protected with an adequate surge protection device?
- Is the parish and priest owned personal computers protected with an adequate surge protection device?

If you have any questions related to the quick fix questions or early warning signs please call our offices, we would be pleased to assist you.

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