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CHECK YOUR OUTLETS DURING STORM SEASON

Damaged GFCIs will not offer protection against accidental shock or electrocution

OLDSMAR, Florida, August 12, 2004 — With Tropical Storm Bonnie and Hurricane Charley approaching, the Tampa Bay area will experience some periods of heavy rainfall and thunderstorms. Because of this stormy weather, S&S Electric urges homeowners to check their ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in order to minimize shock and chances of electrocution.

“In areas prone to thunderstorms and power surges, it is very important to check your GFCIs on a frequent basis,” said Shawn Smith, vice president, S&S Electric. “These systems are designed to protect you against shock and electrocution. During storms, the GFCIs may sustain damage that can cause them to not work properly.”

A GFCI shuts down the protected electric circuit when it senses an unexpected loss of power. The device is constantly monitoring the amount of power flowing from the panel on the phase wire and the amount returning on the neutral wire. When the returning power drops below the amount being supplied, the protection device will trip and open the circuit.

These inexpensive, lifesaving devices should be used in any area of the home where water may come in contact with an electrical appliance, such as your kitchen, bathroom, garage or any outdoor area.

“In the storm prone area in which we live, it is important to have your GFCIs tested in order to ensure they are working properly,” Smith said. “Outlets in older homes are especially vulnerable.”

Testing your GFCIs is a simple procedure.

1. Press the “Reset” button to prepare the unit for testing.
2. Plug a lamp or nightlight into the outlet and turn it on.
3. Press the "Test" button on the GFCI. The GFCI's "Reset" button should pop out, and the light should turn off.
4. Press the “Reset” button to restore power to the outlet.

If the "Reset" button does not pop out, the GFCI may be defective and should be replaced. If the "Reset" button pops out but the light does not go out, the GFCI may have been improperly wired or has been damaged. Contact a licensed electrical contractor immediately to correct the problem.

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CHECK YOUR OUTLETS DURING STORM SEASON Pg. 2

While a homeowner can perform the test to check that their GFCI is working properly, the installation and repair of the GFCI should be done by a professional electrician. To find a qualified technician in your area, please visit the Independent Electrical Contractors Association website at www.ieci.org. You can also find a link to this site from the S&S Electric website at www.ss-electric.com under the News & Information "Industry Links" page. For additional information about GFCIs and electrical safety, please visit the Electrical Safety Foundation at www.electrical-safety.org.

A GCFI testing demonstration is also available at www.ss-electric.com/helpfultips.

S&S Electric Co., was named the 2004 "Dealer of the Year" by the Consumer Electronics Association's (CEA) TechHome Division at the CEA Mark of Excellence Awards. S&S Electric Co., also received the "2004 Heritage Family Business of the Year Award" at the 2004 Florida Family Business Awards held May 14th in Tampa, and was selected as a finalist in the Large Business and Community Service categories.

Installing confidence since 1947, S&S Electric Co., Inc, is West Central Florida's premier home systems contractor for many of the nation's top homebuilders. With more than 275 employees, and offices in Oldsmar, Tampa, Sarasota and Ft. Myers, the company's extensive service offering includes Electrical, Air Conditioning and Structured Cabling Systems, as well as the expertise of an award-winning team of designers, installers and technicians recognized throughout the industry for providing customers with value-added, reliable, quality system installations. For more information about S&S Electric Co., Inc and its many services, please visit www.ss-electric.com.

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