

# Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCI) Information Sheet

## What is an Arc Fault Interrupter?

An Arc Fault Interrupter (AFCI) is an electrical device that detects and protects against arcing (electricity going where it is not intended to be). Arcing faults often occur in damaged or deteriorated wiring and chords. Examples include: puncturing a wire while hanging a picture; poorly installed outlets or switches; chords caught in doors or under furniture; furniture pushed against a plug in an outlet or overheated and/or stressed electrical cords. Once arcing is detected the device trips and de-energizes the circuit.

## What is the difference between and AFCI and a GFCI?

In simplistic terms the AFCI protects against fire hazards, while the Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) protects against personal injury such as shocks related to water contact.

## When is arc fault protection required?

When any receptacle outlet is replaced in a room or area that requires AFCI protection or, for any existing circuit where the circuit is altered, extended or modified in rooms or areas that require AFCI protection.

## What rooms or areas require an AFCI device?

With the exception of garages, unfinished basements and bathrooms and all of the following areas would require protection: kitchens, family rooms, dining rooms, living rooms, parlors, libraries, dens, bedrooms, sunrooms, recreation rooms, closets, hallways, laundry areas or similar areas.

## What requires AFCI protection?

All 15 and 20 ampere 120 volt “openings” including receptacle outlets, devices including switches, lighting outlets, recessed can “lites,” hard wired smoke detectors or other code related outlets.

AFCI protection is typically provided by a specific circuit breaker at the panel.

## How is Arc Fault protection provided?

Generally, by the installation of a specific type circuit breaker (AFCI) at the electrical panel box. In areas where a receptacle is being replaced then an AFCI designated type receptacle may be installed.

The AFCI device must always be readily accessible.

**This information is a guide to the most common questions. It is not intended, nor shall it be considered, a complete set of requirements.**