

NEWS from CPSC

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May Is National Electrical Safety Month: Good News for Homeowners - Aluminum Wiring Fix Still Available

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced today that Tyco Electronics Corp., of Harrisburg, Pa., has agreed to continue offering the COPALUM connector repair system until at least 2005 for homes with aluminum wiring. The COPALUM repair system has benefited tens of thousands of consumers by reducing the risks of dangerous overheating and fire that can be caused by failing aluminum wiring connections. It is estimated that 2 million homes were built with aluminum wire between 1965 and 1973.

Warning signs, such as warm-to-the-touch face plates on outlets or switches, flickering lights, circuits that don't work, or the smell of burning plastics, can indicate a fire hazard within 15- and 20-ampere aluminum wiring circuits. A failure in the circuits can lead to electrical arcing and a serious fire, which can spread within the walls of a home before being detected.

The COPALUM crimp connector, which has been available for more than 20 years, is the only system recognized by CPSC that provides a complete and permanent repair and reduces the fire hazard in aluminum wire circuits. The COPALUM connector system attaches a copper wire to the old aluminum wires and is then crimped together with a power tool, achieving a "cold weld" between the conductors. The "cold weld" creates a permanent bond that eliminates electrical arcing or glowing connections and creates a safer electrical connection at outlets, switches, lights, circuit breakers, and panelboard terminals. The COPALUM connector repair materials and power crimping tools are only available to electricians who receive training from the manufacturer, to ensure that repairs are properly made.

"CPSC appreciates Tyco's commitment to protecting the safety of consumers by continuing to offer COPALUM connectors," said CPSC Chairman Hal Stratton. "Without the Tyco Electronics system, the only method for safely upgrading aluminum wiring systems would be to install new copper circuits, which is often impractical for consumers."

CPSC believes that "twist-on" connectors, receptacles and switches and other devices that connect directly to aluminum wires, are an inadequate solution. The COPALUM crimp connector system provides a safe, permanent fix.

If homeowners are not certain whether their home has aluminum branch circuit wiring, they can look at the markings on the surface of the electric cables which may be visible in unfinished basements, attics or garages. Aluminum wiring will have "Al" or "Aluminum" marked every few feet along the cable. A home inspector or qualified electrician also can assist in identifying aluminum wiring. CPSC advises that consumers should not open the interior of the panelboard or circuit breaker compartment - this can expose live wires and pose an electrocution hazard.

COPALUM connectors are available from Tyco Electronics under the AMP brand. Consumers can check to see if the COPALUM connector system is available in their area by calling the company at (800) 522-6752. To order a list of authorized electricians in their area, consumers can write to: Tyco Electronics Corp., Attn: Aluminum Wire Repair Program, P.O. Box 3608, Harrisburg, PA 17105-3608. If no authorized electrician is currently located

nearby, consumers can have an electrician interested in repairing their home contact the nearest supplier of AMP-brand COPALUM connectors for training and other repair information.

For more information about aluminum wiring and the crimp connector system, see "[Repairing Aluminum Wiring](#)" (pdf). Consumers can also obtain a free copy of this booklet by writing to CPSC, Washington, DC 20207.