

## Electrical Distribution Safety

### BACKGROUND

Due to a number of overvoltage incidents in Ontario that impacted customer owned life saving equipment, an LDC working group was formed to discuss a process for the LDC's to effectively communicate to their customers of the potential for damage from a temporary overvoltage event. With the assistance of the working group, ESA documented a process on how to address customer awareness of the potential damage to their life saving equipment caused by an overvoltage event.

### GENERAL

The ESA considers life saving equipment as the following; ground fault circuit interrupters (circuit breaker or receptacle), arc fault circuit interrupters (circuit breaker or receptacle), and hard wired smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. If this equipment has been damaged by an overvoltage event, they may not provide protection as intended.

### ESA RECOMMENDS

When there is reason to believe the customers' electrical equipment or the LDCs' revenue meter has been damaged by an overvoltage event, including lightning strike or if a primary distribution line contacts a secondary distribution line, the customer(s) should be notified to have their life saving equipment checked for damage. LDC's should create a communication plan to inform their potentially affected customers of the potential damage to their life saving equipment when an overvoltage event occurs and inform their personnel who would be involved with customer relations of the process.

The attached safety communication material (Figure 1) or similar information can be sent out. This communication material provides potentially affected customer(s) information regarding what they should do to determine if their life saving equipment has been damaged. Electronic copies of the letter are attached to this Bulletin. Use of the letter, developed by the working group, ensures consistency, clarity and completeness of the message to the customer. Door hangers (Figure 2) with similar information may also be used. The working file to add the LDC's logo is available by following the link to a [drop box](#).

### ESA's PROCESS

Once ESA has been made aware of an event where the customers' life saving equipment has potentially been damaged, ESA will communicate with the LDC in a timely manner to ensure if they provided or will be providing information to their potentially affected customers that their life saving equipment may have been damaged.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Information requests and follow-up may be directed to ESA at [Utility.Regulations@ElectricalSafety.on.ca](mailto:Utility.Regulations@ElectricalSafety.on.ca). For questions on this bulletin please be prepared to quote Bulletin "DB-03/16 R1".

## Electrical Distribution Safety

### Figure 1- LDC Letter

[Date]

[Customer Name]

[Address]

[City/Town, Province]

[Postal Code]

Dear [Customer Name]

**IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION**  
**LIFE SAVING EQUIPMENT IN YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS**  
**(INCLUDING SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS)**  
**MAY HAVE BEEN DAMAGED**

It has come to our attention that between DATE and DATE more than the normal amount of electricity may have run through the powerlines. This has the potential to damage electrical systems and equipment inside buildings.

#### What is life saving equipment?

- **Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)** are circuit breakers located in your electrical panel or power outlets on walls. They protect you from getting an electrical shock in wet places like kitchens, bathrooms, whirlpool tubs, or outside.
- **Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs)** are circuit breakers located in your electrical panel or power outlets on walls. They can sense problems in the wiring of your home. If they sense a problem, the breaker or outlet stops electricity from flowing to help avoid a fire.
- **Smoke Alarms** sense smoke and make a loud noise to warn you there may be a fire so you can get out of the building safely. Smoke alarms that are connected to your home's electrical system may have been damaged; and
- **Carbon Monoxide Alarms** can sense this poisonous gas and make a loud noise to warn you so you can get out of the building safely. Carbon monoxide can kill you if you breathe in too much. Carbon monoxide alarms that are connected to your home's electrical system may have been damaged.

#### What's the risk?

If any life saving equipment items were damaged they may not work properly as designed to protect and warn you.

#### What should you do? **[NO CHANGES ALLOWED BY LDC FOR THIS SECTION, WITHOUT PRIOR DISCUSSION WITH ESA]**

Ontario's Electrical Safety Authority advises that you do the following as soon as possible:

- Follow the manufacturers' instructions to test equipment. If you suspect damage to equipment and don't have these instructions or you don't feel comfortable testing them yourself, contact a Licensed Electrical Contractor. You can find a searchable list of all Licensed Electrical Contractors in Ontario at [esasafe.com](http://esasafe.com).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT [INSERT LDC NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION]**

**Electrical Distribution Safety**

**Figure 2- Door Hangers**



**What you should know:**

When more than the normal amount of electricity flows through the powerlines that connect your house to the electricity grid, this can cause damage to any electrical device in your home.

Damage to this life safety equipment can create serious safety hazards:

- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs): Electrical outlets, or circuit breakers located in your electrical panel, are designed to protect you from shock in wet environments like the bathroom, kitchen or outdoors.
- Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs): Electrical outlets, or circuit breakers located in your electrical panel, are designed to sense problems in your wiring and shut power off to help prevent a fire.
- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms: If this equipment is connected to your home's wiring, it may not operate to warn you of smoke or poisonous gases in your home.

**What you should do:**

- Test all life safety devices by looking for the 'test' and 'reset' buttons and following the manufacturers' instructions.
- If you don't have the instructions or feel unsure about doing the testing yourself, contact a Licensed Electrical Contractor. You can find one near you at [esafe.com](http://esafe.com)
- Remember, if you hire someone to repair or replace any electrical equipment in your home, you must hire a Licensed Electrical Contractor. It's the law.

For more information and safety tips or to find a Licensed Electrical Contractor near you please visit [esafe.com](http://esafe.com) or call 1-877-372-7233






**Electrical Safety Alert:**

**YOUR HOME  
MAY HAVE BEEN  
AFFECTED BY A  
POWER SURGE**

Learn about the risks  
and what you should do. ▶







ESA is an administrative authority acting on behalf of the Government of Ontario with specific responsibilities under the Electricity Act and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act. As part of its mandate, ESA is responsible for administering regulation of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code, licensing of Electrical Contractors, and Master Electricians, electrical distribution safety, and electrical product safety.