



## Media Release

# Latest Update to Ontario Electrical Safety Code Includes Important New Safety Requirements

*Comes into Effect May 5, 2016*

**MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO (May 5, 2016)** –The latest edition of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code (OESC) – the legal standard with which all electrical work in Ontario must comply – comes into effect today, May 5, and includes important new safety requirements.

The OESC is updated to reflect important advances in safety that will help keep Ontario families safer from electrical harm – reducing fires and saving lives.

“The Ontario Electrical Safety Code is a true example of how collaborative efforts can result in safety advancements,” says Scott Saint, Chief Public Safety Officer, Electrical Safety Authority. “ESA, together with its safety partners, participated in a collaborative consultation process both provincially and nationally, and reviewed technical and incident data to inform this updated version, based on the Canadian Electrical Code. Anyone doing electrical work in Ontario must understand the requirements of this new edition to help ensure safe electrical installations.”

The latest edition of the OESC contains a number of amendments that have been made based on key learnings from safety incident data, including the three significant changes below:

- **Expanded requirements for Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs)** – a device that de-energizes the circuit when it detects an electrical arc. Circuits that supply bedroom receptacles have been required to be protected by AFCIs since 2002. ESA’s analysis of the Ontario Office of the Fire Marshal’s data concluded that AFCI protection could reduce residential electrical distribution fires by up to 71 per cent. The new OESC expanded the requirements to include most other areas of the home, including outdoors. The new OESC also requires “combination type” AFCIs that protect wiring within house walls and connected electrical cords against the unwanted effects of arcing.
- **New guidelines for safe clearances between light fixtures and combustibles** – in response to several fires in Ontario in the past five years caused by light fixtures coming too close to flammable materials (which includes shelving.) The previous OESC required a shade or guard for lights installed where combustibles are stored. The new OESC goes beyond storage areas to other situations where combustibles may exist, such as kitchen cabinetry close to pot lights. It provides guidance for minimum clearances that will minimize any potential overheating to combustible materials surrounding light fixtures.

- **Wiring at non-commercial docks** – to address hazards associated with electric shock drowning, which are present not just at commercial facilities but also on private docks. Electric shock drowning occurs when a person comes into contact with water that has been energized from faulted electrical products or installations. The new OESC states that receptacles on commercial docks and marinas as well as cottage docks are required to be protected by Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs). Feeder circuits installed in or on a cottage boathouse or dock are also required to be protected by GFCIs. GFCIs can cut the power before a dangerous or even fatal shock occurs as a result of electricity coming into contact with water.

Other additions to the new OESC include changes for renewable energy installations including requirements for rapid shutdown for solar, and specifics on the location of electrical hook-ups for recreational vehicle (RV) parking, to reduce unsafe use of extension cords and harmonize with the United States' National Electrical Code.

In addition to prescriptive amendments and rules regarding instructions for safe electrical installations, the OESC also contains requirements regarding electrical permits. Specifically, almost all electrical work requires a permit. In Ontario, only a Licensed Electrical Contractor is legally allowed to be hired for electrical work, and only homeowners or occupants are able to conduct electrical work in their own home.

And although homeowners and occupants are legally allowed to do electrical work in their own home, ESA strongly encourages hiring a Licensed Electrical Contractor – and it's important to ensure the required electrical permits are being taken out. A permit creates a permanent record of the electrical work and triggers a review of the work by ESA. Once the electrical work is complete, it is imperative to ask for an ESA Certificate of Inspection for resale and insurance purposes, as well as peace of mind.

To learn more about Ontario's legal requirements for electrical installations, for frequently asked questions about the Ontario Electrical Safety Code, or to purchase a copy, visit [www.esasafe.com/2015oesc](http://www.esasafe.com/2015oesc).

### **About the Electrical Safety Authority**

The Electrical Safety Authority's (ESA's) role is to enhance public electrical safety in Ontario. As an administrative authority acting on behalf of the Government of Ontario, ESA is responsible for administering specific regulations related to the Ontario Electrical Safety Code, the licensing of Electrical Contractors and Master Electricians, electricity distribution system safety, and electrical product safety. ESA works extensively with stakeholders throughout the province on education, training and promotion to foster electrical safety across the province. More information on the Electrical Safety Authority can be found at [www.esasafe.com](http://www.esasafe.com), through <https://twitter.com/homeandsafety> and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ElectricalSafetyAuthority](http://www.facebook.com/ElectricalSafetyAuthority).

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For further information:

Electrical Safety Authority Media Relations

905-712-7819 or [Media.ESA@electricalsafety.on.ca](mailto:Media.ESA@electricalsafety.on.ca)