

Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services

Electrical Safety Authority Position:

The Electrical Safety Authority provides electrical installation and maintenance advice in accordance with the Ontario Electrical Safety Code standard requirements and guidelines. Regular review and assessment of these requirements from individuals that represent the industry, other jurisdictions, and the public, supports the highest possible standard for public electrical safety.

Knob and tube wiring, like other wiring methods, presents no hazard to homeowners as long as it is properly maintained. In accordance with the Ontario Electrical Safety Code knob and tube wiring concealed in walls, floor spaces, etc; supplying general lighting and receptacle circuits may remain if proper overcurrent protection is in place; no additional outlets have been added to the original installation so as to overload the circuit; and the wiring where visible, appears in good condition. Since 1963, provisions have been required by the Ontario Electrical Safety Code for grounding associated with new wiring/outlet installations in Ontario homes, including those where knob and tube wiring exists. Like all other wiring, knob and tube wiring should be replaced where exposed wires show evidence of mechanical abuse and or deterioration, poor connections, overheating, alterations that result in overloading, or if changes to wiring contravene any section of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code.

Provincial statistics from the Fire Marshal's office on home fires have not provided any indication that knob and tube wiring provides a higher risk associated with fire that result from home wiring. In addition, Electrical Safety Authority investigations of home fires, at the request of local Fire Departments, have not created any concern associated with knob and tube wiring. In 2000 there were 6,738 electrical associated fires in Ontario according to the official reports of the Fire Marshal's Office. The majority of these fires were associated with electrical stove top/ranges. The total number of fires associated residential electrical wiring in the same year was 354. From Electrical Safety Authority investigations the most common cause of home fires from wiring result from unsafe wiring practices and installations that do not meet the requirements of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code.

The Electrical Safety Authority conducts general inspections of homes in response to homeowner/potential homeowner requests, or at the request of local building authorities or fire departments, to identify potential electrical safety hazards in their home. A general inspection is a visual inspection of an existing electrical installation, or some portion of the installation, and a written report outlining fire and shock hazards. Over the past 10 months we have conducted 9,300 general inspections and identified 105 defects associated with knob and tube wiring. This represents 1% of all general inspections and only .1% of all defects that the Electrical Safety Authority reports on an annual basis.