## Protect your children from electrical shock

COLLEGE PARK, Md. --- Last August, a four-year-old boy was electrocuted in his home when he bit into a live appliance cord. The child was sitting in the basement on a wet rug, soaked several days earlier by flooding.

Unfortunately, grim accidents, like this one reported by the National Safety Council, are not isolated, says Greta L. Smith, agricultural engineer for the University of Maryland's Cooperative Extension Service. "You would think home is the

safest place for a child to be, but that isn't always the case," says Smith.

In 1984, for example, more people were hurt in their own homes than anywhere else. The National Safety Council reported that more than three million home accidents led to disabling injuries during that year. Of that three million, 21,000 accidents were fatal and 2,000 of the fatalities were children under five, according to

Electrical mishaps, while not

always fatal, are most common. Smith says there are a number of things parents and providers of child care can do to protect their children from shock:

• Monitor children, especially in those rooms that contain heavy appliances, such as the kitchen, bathroom, laundry room and basement

• Don't let children play on a wet floor or carpet in rooms with electrical outlets or appliances. -

• Keep electrical appliances and electrical tools out of children's Mances and reach. Teach older children how to unplug and store electrical toys after play, especially if there are toddlers about.

Be on the lookout for damaged wires or loose plugs, AND REPLACE THEM! If possible, train older children to report defects to you when they see them.

• Instruct children about the safe uses of electricity. That means stressing the dangers of using electrical products near sinks, tubs and other wet places.

• Keep power and extension cords out of sight, away from foot traffic areas, and places where small teeth can bite into them. Where possible, use heavy duty extension cords that will not yield so easily to small teeth.

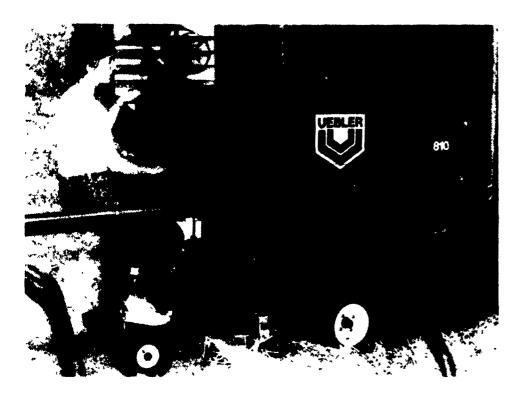
• Use safety caps to cover unused wall outlets.

If your child suffers a severe shock, yell for help immediately, Smith advises. While you are helping the child, someone else, if they are available, can call the paramedics. If you are alone, separate the child from the electrical source using some material that does not conduct electricity, such as a board or dry towel. If the child has stopped breathing, immediately begin artificial respiration. And, if there is no pulse, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Since many parents or providers of child care are not trained in CPR, Smith advises at least one member of every family to get that important training. "Trained help can often be five or more minutes away and, without immediate help, a severely shocked child faces brain damage and death," Smith says. "I strongly urge adult members of the family to get CPR training," he adds.



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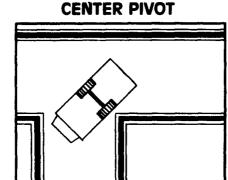


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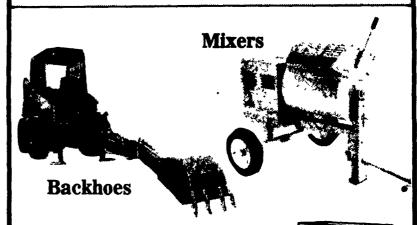
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