



Homeowner Safety Should Come First

While I respect the comments made by Mr. Holt in “Expanded AFCI Requirements Spark Controversy” (*In the News*, 9/07), the key issue at hand is safety, which is what AFCIs were designed to provide. Homeowner safety needs to be a priority in the home-building process, but it seems builders are too hung up on cost. Electrical fires kill and destroy property; the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) believes that AFCIs could stop up to 50 percent of these devastating fires, yet many builders are opposed to them. Whether you use the CPSC cost estimate

of \$15 to \$20 per AFCI or the street cost of \$30 to \$35 (not including installation), it’s still relatively insignificant compared with the deaths, injuries, and hundreds of millions of dollars of property loss caused by electrical fires annually. According to the story, Mr. Holt’s belief is that “few electrical contractors ... have experience with the new combination AFCIs.” To the trained eye of the contractor, installation of the combination AFCI is essentially the same as the standard version, which the NEC has required for years. The difference, and what the NEC has recognized in

its expansion of the AFCI requirement, is that the combination AFCI detects both parallel and series arcing — a technological leap forward in homeowner protection. It’s also important to note that the expanded NEC requirements have the support of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) and other prominent organizations. AFCIs are a major benefit to the homeowner and a safety measure that builders and others involved in the home construction process should not overlook. They are certainly well worth the small investment.

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