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SFMO Issues Guidance on Power Reconnection Following Floods State Electrical Inspectors Will Work With Local Officials to Safely Restore Power to Affected Areas

NASHVILLE – As recovery from February’s flooding continues, the Tennessee State Fire Marshal’s Office (SFMO) is working with local power companies to help safely restore power to homes in flood-affected areas and reminding consumers to focus on fire and electrical safety during this period.

Unprecedented rainfall in February caused flooding across Tennessee, resulting in Tennessee Governor Bill Lee recently issuing a flood-related [Executive Order](#). Since Feb. 23, 2019, **83 of Tennessee’s 95 counties** have reported flood damages and impacts, along with **19** counties issuing State of Emergency declarations.

In some communities where flooding occurred, the local power company took precautions to ensure electrocution prevention, including shutting off power to affected electrical grids. Before power can be restored to a flooded home, a certified electrical inspector **must** conduct visual inspections of locations impacted by floodwaters to assess potential damage. If it is determined that floodwaters **did not** reach electrical equipment, it will be left to the local power company to determine if electrical service may be turned back on. If minor damage from floodwater is observed, the replacement of receptacles and switches will be necessary to ensure the safe operation of electrical equipment with no need for further inspection.

State electrical inspectors began visiting flooded areas on Monday, March 11, 2019. Visits will continue, when possible, at all locations impacted by the flooding. (An employee with the local power company may accompany the inspector as they work to safely restore power.) State electrical inspectors will be clearly identified by their uniforms.

If the electrical inspector determines that floodwaters rose to a level that affected electrical equipment, the SFMO advises that the property owner work with a licensed electrician to determine what components need to be replaced or repaired. In this event, a subsequent electrical inspection will be conducted before the property is re-energized.

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Homeowners insurance may help cover the cost of replacing appliances and other personal belongings and property that has been damaged. Questions? Consumers are urged to contact your insurance agent and/or company to discuss any available assistance and questions about your coverage.

To help consumers avoid shock and fire hazards, the SFMO shares the following tips:

- After electricity has been restored, reconnect appliances and other electronics with caution. Ensure that the appliance did not suffer flood-related damage and that the power cord is not frayed.
- Never plug major appliances (like stoves, refrigerators, washers, or dryers) into an extension cord or power strip.
- Always have electrical work done by a qualified electrician.
- Call an electrician and cut your power at the breaker if:
 - A receptacle is frequently blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers
 - You receive a tingling feeling when you touch an appliance
 - You notice discolored or warm wall outlets
 - You sense a burning or rubbery smell coming from an appliance
 - You see sparks coming from an outlet
 - You notice flickering or dimming lights
- Remember: You do not need a flame to start a fire. Fires can start when heat builds up near other items (such as a hot lightbulb being too close to a flammable item) or heat from a cord placed under a rug or carpet.

For more information on the SFMO's Electrical, Residential, and Marina section, visit our [website](#).

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