Flipping a light switch. Plugging in a coffeemaker. Charging a laptop computer. These are second nature for most of us. Electricity makes our lives easier. However, we need to be cautious and keep safety in mind.

SAFETY TIPS

• Have all electrical work done by a qualified electrician.

• When you are buying or remodeling a home, have it inspected by a qualified private inspector or in accordance with local requirements.

• Only use one heat-producing appliance (such as a coffee maker, toaster, space heater, etc.) plugged into a receptacle outlet at a time.

• Major appliances (refrigerators, dryers, washers, stoves, air conditioners, microwave ovens, etc.) should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle outlet. Extension cords and plug strips should not be used.

• Arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) shut off electricity when a dangerous condition occurs. Consider having them installed in your home.

• Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to reduce the risk of shock. GFCIs shut off an electrical circuit when it becomes a shock hazard. They should be installed inside the home in bathrooms, kitchens, garages and basements. All outdoor receptacles should be GFCI protected.

• Test AFCIs and GFCIs once a month according to the manufacturer’s recommendations. You do not need a flame to start a fire. Fires can start when heat builds up near things that burn. This can happen when a hot light bulb is near things that burn, such as cloth or paper, or a cord has been placed under a carpet.

• Check electrical cords to make sure they are not running across doorways or under carpets. Extension cords are intended for temporary use. Have a qualified electrician add more receptacle outlets so you don’t have to use extension cords.

• Use a light bulb with the right number of watts. There should be a sticker that indicates the right number of watts.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Call a qualified electrician or your landlord if you have:

• Frequent problems with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers

• A tingling feeling when you touch an electrical appliance

• Discolored or warm wall outlets

• A burning or rubbery smell coming from an appliance

• Flickering or dimming lights

• Sparks from an outlet