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TESTING & COST COMPARISON REVEALS NOT ALL FORMS OF ARC FAULT PROTECTION ARE THE SAME IN NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION

AFCI Circuit Breakers Offer Protection/Cost Advantages over AFCI Receptacles

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Electrical Contractors and Inspectors Cautioned that AFCI Receptacles Will Not Meet Electrical Code Requirements Without Significant Additional Installation Costs

WASHINGTON D.C. (November 17, 2017) – The American Circuit Breaker Manufacturers Association (ACBMA), a non-profit group whose members include Eaton, General Electric, Schneider Electric and Siemens, today announced that following comparison testing between Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter (AFCI)/Dual Function circuit breakers and AFCI/Dual Function receptacles, AFCI breakers successfully protected against dangerous parallel arcing throughout the entire home run of wiring in new home building, while AFCI receptacles did not. AFCI receptacles also required additional encasement costs either in metal conduit or cement to meet National Electrical Code® (NEC®) standards.

"As manufacturers of these important safety devices, we all share the common goals of protecting new homes from electrical fires and protecting people from the risk of electrocution. It is critical that the electrical community fully understand the differences between arc fault technologies and their options in the marketplace," said Alan Manche, Vice President External Affairs for Schneider Electric and ACBMA member. "A good example of these differences is that while AFCI receptacles do offer protection at the outlet, they repeatedly failed beyond that point as demonstrated in a recent ACBMA test against UL 1699 standards regarding parallel arcing faults on the branch circuit home run wiring in the home. AFCI circuit breakers, however, successfully passed this test not only detecting, but stopping that deadly form of arcing that can lead to electrical fires."

"The results of these tests prove that if AFCI receptacles are used instead of AFCI circuit breakers, up to 30 percent of wiring in every new home built could be at risk from dangerous parallel arcing because AFCI receptacles will not detect that condition," said Kevin Lippert, Manager Codes and Standards, Eaton Corporation and ACBMA member. "That creates a very real risk that should be of significant concern for every electrician, inspector and ultimately the homeowner."

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The 2014 and 2017 NEC® codes also require that AFCI receptacles can be used in new home construction only if their home run wiring is enclosed in two inches of concrete or steel-armored type cable. In contrast, AFCI circuit breakers do not require these additional efforts or costs and are UL approved as a means of protecting against electrical fires, and have met the NEC® requirements for nearly 18 years.

"Our greatest concern is that electrical contractors and inspectors nationwide are not being made fully aware of the important differences in arc fault protection technologies and the associated requirements," said Randy Dollar, Director, Codes and Standards, Siemens and ACBMA member. "While some claim AFCI receptacles are cheaper at around $30 and work just as well as AFCI circuit breakers at around a $40 cost, the facts and testing prove otherwise. The AFCI receptacles failed critical testing regarding protection against parallel arcing and also require additional costs – in the form of labor and materials to comply with code requirements. AFCI circuit breakers protect a home's entire electrical system - including the home run - from parallel arcing without those additional costs."

AFCI circuit breakers have been an NEC® requirement since 1999. Each year the National Fire Protection Association indicates there are more than 45,000 electrical house fires in the U.S. For more information on the testing visit www.acbma.org. Electrical contractors and inspectors can also download additional factual information on the website.