

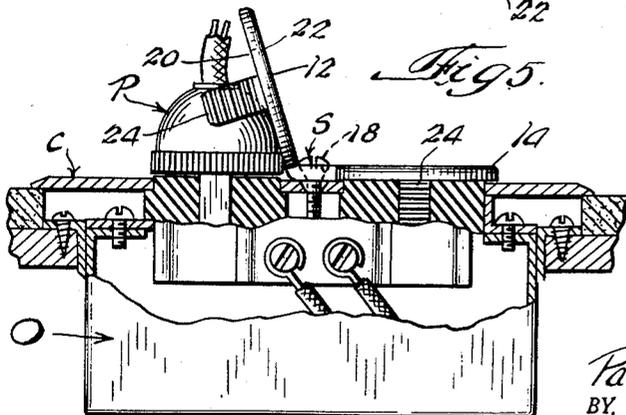
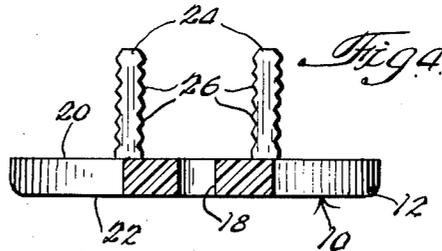
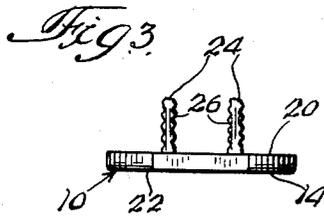
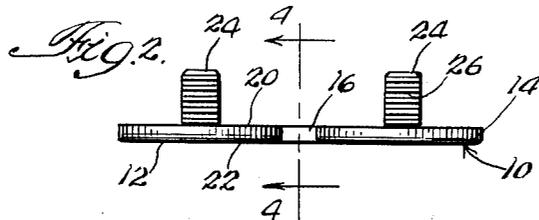
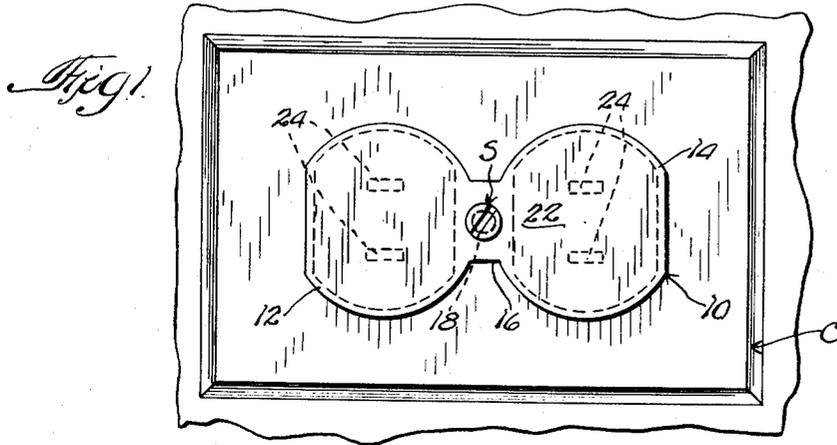
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P. P. ABRAHAM ET AL

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SAFETY COVER FOR ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

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INVENTORS.
Paul P. Abraham.
BY. & Romain Metzger.
Richard W. Carpenter *Att'y*

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SAFETY COVER FOR ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

Paul P. Abraham and Romain Metzger, Chicago, Ill.

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3 Claims. (Cl. 339-38)

This invention relates to protective devices for electrical outlets, and more particularly to a safety cover for electrical wall outlets.

The invention comprehends a one-piece safety cover or guard adapted for semi-permanent attachment to standard duplex electrical wall outlets to prevent the accidental or inadvertent insertion of metal objects such as pins and nails into the receptacle openings of the outlets.

Although the prior art includes numerous devices for covering electrical wall outlets, most of these devices are complex structures that are expensive to produce and awkward or inconvenient to use. Some devices utilize sliding mechanisms with intricate moving parts, and other devices include box-like housings which must be disconnected from the outlet to allow the insertion or withdrawal of an electrical plug into or out of the outlet receptacles.

The simplest of the prior art devices are merely dummy plugs which can be inserted into the outlet receptacles when the receptacles are not in use. These devices have several disadvantages, a primary one of which is that they are not connected to the outlet and so, when not in use, tend to become lost, misplaced, or broken. Also most of these dummy plugs protrude from the wall and offer a far greater temptation of removal for children than would a flat plate with a smooth outer surface.

Accordingly, it is an important object of this invention to provide a safety cover for electrical wall outlets that is simple in structure so as to be economical to produce, yet which is rugged and durable in service.

Another object of the invention is the provision of a one-piece flat safety cover that can be readily attached to any standard duplex electrical wall outlet without altering or modifying the structure of the outlet and without requiring any additional connection means other than the screw which also secures the cover plate to the outlet.

A further object of the invention is the provision of a safety cover for a duplex outlet that will permit the use of either one or both of the outlet receptacles while the cover is still attached to the outlet.

Yet another object of the invention is the provision of a safety cover formed of a flexible non-conductive material.

Still another object of the invention is the provision of a safety cover having prongs for insertion into the receptacle openings of the outlet to actually plug the openings.

A more specific object of the invention is to provide a one-piece flexible safety cover for a duplex outlet having resilient ribbed prongs which require an appreciable degree of force to withdraw them from the receptacle openings of the outlet.

These and other objects of the invention will be apparent from an examination of the following description and drawings, wherein:

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Figure 1 is a fragmentary front elevational view of a safety cover embodying features of the invention, with the device shown as applied to a standard duplex electrical wall outlet;

Figure 2 is a plan view of the safety cover illustrated in Figure 1;

Figure 3 is an end elevational view of the structure illustrated in Figure 2;

Figure 4 is an enlarged sectional view taken on line 4-4 of Figure 2;

Figure 5 is a plan view of the structure illustrated in Figure 1 showing the position of the safety cover when one receptacle of the outlet is in use, and

Figure 6 is a fragmentary detail view of a modified form of one of the prongs illustrated in Figure 4.

Referring now to the drawings for a better understanding of the invention, it will be seen that the novel cover comprises a relatively thin flat flexible plate, indicated generally at 10, preferably formed of a soft pliable resilient material, such as polyethylene, which is a non-conductor of electricity.

Plate 10, as seen in plan, comprises a pair of generally round end sections or flaps 12 and 14 which are interconnected by a narrow center section or medial strip 16 formed integrally with the respective end sections.

The end sections are preferably of substantially the same size and shape as the receptacles of a standard duplex electrical wall outlet and are spaced from each other the same distance as are the receptacles, so that when the plate 10 is placed over a standard outlet, as best seen in Figure 1, the end sections 12 and 14 will cover the respective receptacles. Center section 16 is provided with a hole 18 extending therethrough and located midway between the end sections so as to coincide with the location of the cover plate mounting screw hole in a standard duplex electrical wall outlet.

Plate 10, as best seen in Figure 2, is a relatively thin flat plate with rear and front surfaces 20 and 22, respectively, which are parallel to each other.

Each end section is provided with a pair of integrally formed prongs 24 which protrude from rear surface 20 in a direction normal to the plane of surface 20. Each pair of prongs is located centrally of its related end section and the prongs of each pair are spaced from each other the same distance as are the prongs of a standard electrical plug, or the prong receiving openings of a standard electrical receptacle, to permit their insertion into the receptacle openings as hereinafter explained in detail.

As best seen in Figure 4, each of the prongs are provided on their sides with a plurality of preferably parallel spaced ribs or ridges 26 which extend in a direction normal to the longitudinal axis of the prong itself and generally parallel to the plane of plate 10 when the plate is in its extended or flat position.

To apply the novel safety cover to a conventional electrical wall outlet, all that is required is to remove the screw S which secures the cover plate C to the outlet O, place the plate 10 on top of the outlet and cover plate C with inner surface 20 abutting the cover plate and outlet and with end sections 12 and 14 covering the respective receptacles of the outlet, and secure both the plate 10 and the cover plate to the outlet by means of screw S which extends through hole 18 in center section 16 of plate 10.

If no electrical plugs are to be inserted into the receptacles of the outlet then pressure is applied by hand to front surface 22 of plate 10, to force the prongs 24 of each end section into the openings of the related receptacles of the outlet.

As best seen in Figure 4, prongs 24 are provided with a plurality of longitudinally spaced transversely extending

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ribs or beads which give the prongs undulated or saw-tooth-like outer surfaces. By this construction the prongs are afforded some degree of resiliency to enable them to yieldingly resist attempts to insert them into or, more important, attempts to withdraw them from the receptacle openings of an electrical outlet. If desired the ribs 26a of prongs 24a, as seen in Figure 6, may be inclined toward surface plate 10 so as to offer more resistance to removal than to insertion. Also, of course, the prongs will be of a cross-sectional area which is slightly greater than that of the prongs of a standard electrical plug so as to prevent their insertion or removal without the application of pressure.

Once the safety cover has been secured to a wall outlet by the cover plate screw S, it can remain there permanently or semi-permanently as desired, and it can be readily removed when desired.

After the prongs of the plate end sections have been pushed into the opening of the related outlet receptacles, the outlet is safely covered and protected against the possibility of someone accidentally pushing a pointed metal object into a receptacle and thereby damaging the outlet or, even more serious, causing grave injury to himself.

When it is desired to utilize one or both of the receptacles of the outlet, all that is required is to lift up an end section, thereby withdrawing the prongs of that section from the receptacle, bending the end section of the safety cover back out of the way, as seen in Figure 5, and inserting the electrical plug into the open receptacle.

Thus, it is readily apparent that the novel safety cover is simple in design and construction so as to be extremely economical from the standpoint of production; and at the same time the device is entirely safe and easy for any one to apply and use, and it affords a maximum of protection against accidents arising from the accidental or inadvertent insertion of metal objects into the receptacle openings when the outlets are not in use.

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We claim:

1. A safety cover for semi-permanent attachment to a standard duplex electrical wall outlet, comprising: a relatively thin flat flexible plate formed of a pliable non-conductive material and presenting oppositely-facing front and rear sides, said plate including a pair of end sections joined by a center section formed integrally with said end sections, said center section having an aperture extending therethrough between the front side and the rear side to permit the plate to be detachably secured to the outlet by a screw which also serves to secure an outlet cover plate to the outlet, said end sections each having a pair of integral spaced prongs extending from the rear sides thereof for insertion into a pair of related receptacle openings of the outlet to plug said openings when said receptacle openings of the outlet are not in use.

2. A safety cover according to claim 1, wherein said prongs are of slightly larger cross-sectional area than prongs of a standard electrical plug so that an appreciable amount of pressure is required to effect their insertion into or their withdrawal from the receptacle openings of the outlet.

3. A safety cover according to claim 1, wherein said prongs include means operable to yieldingly resist their removal from said openings.

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