The present invention relates to the field of electrical outlet receptacle protective devices and more specifically to a locating guard that is temporarily applied to an electrical outlet receptacle prior to the plastering of the wall surface in which the receptacle is located, to prevent the entry of foreign material into the receptacle during plastering of said surface and to indicate the location of said receptacle after plastering in the event that said receptacle has been covered up.

A major object of the invention is to provide a locating guard that will at all times indicate the position of the receptacle to which it is applied but will not in any way interfere with the application of plaster to the surface in which said receptacle is located.

Another important objective of the invention is to furnish a device of this character that is adapted to prevent the accumulation of any deposit of plaster or other foreign material in the receptacle to which it is applied in the interim between initial installation of said receptacle and completion of plastering of the surface in which said receptacle is located.

Yet another object of the invention is to make available a guard that is easily found in a plastered wall and is quickly and easily removable therefrom in a manner that will not injure the finished surface, leaving a clean, sharp edge that exactly defines the opening of said receptacle.

It is also an object of the invention to supply devices of this character which are easily fabricated from inexpensive materials so that they will not appreciably increase the cost of structures in which they are used.

These and other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following description of a preferred form thereof and certain variations thereof, and from the drawings illustrating those forms in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view showing the invention in position in an electrical outlet receptacle of a wall prior to the surfacing of the wall;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the form of invention shown in Figure 1 showing the appearance of the invention prior to folding thereof for insertion into a receptacle;

Figure 3 is a horizontal sectional view of the device shown in Figure 1 illustrating the condition of the invention and receptacle after finishing of the surface in which the receptacle is located;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of a variation of the invention adapted for use with a different type of receptacle; and

Figure 5 is a perspective view of another variation of the invention adapted for use with a receptacle of the type that encloses a telephone or television antenna jack.

Referring now to the drawing for the general arrangement of the invention and particularly to Figure 2 thereof, it will be seen that my new locating guard, indicated generally by the letter G, consists of a generally rectangular sheet S of a rigid material, having a pair of locators L made of a flexible sheet material attached to foldable opposite side portions P thereof. Folding of said side portions causes locaters L to extend outwardly from sheet S a distance greater than the thickness of the plaster T which is to be applied to the wall in which electrical outlet receptacle R is located. The folded side portions of guard G are placed inside the opening of receptacle R. The portion of sheet S between protruding locators L defines a cover C of substantially the same configuration as the receptacle opening that is adapted to seal said opening against entry of plaster during the plastering of the wall. Locators L in no way interfere with the plastering operation because they yield to contact with the plastering tools, and after the completion of the plastering job clearly indicate the position of guard G, so that it may be removed, leaving receptacle R in a clean condition.

Guard G of Figure 2 is specifically intended for use with an electrical outlet receptacle R of the size shown in Figure 1 which is a metal box adapted to house a single switch or two plug outlets. Receptacle R has a frontal opening O defined by two vertically disposed walls 10 and 12, and a top wall 14 and bottom wall 16. Attached to one of the vertical walls, such as wall 10, is an L-shaped bracket 18 in whose outwardly extending arm a pair of vertically spaced holes 20 are formed. As Figure 3 shows, holes 20 are adapted to receive wood screws 22 by means of which receptacle R is connected to the front face of a stud 24 that forms part of a wall intended to be finished with plaster. It will be noted that bracket 18 supports receptacle R on said stud in such a way that receptacle opening O extends forwardly from stud 24 a greater, or at least an equal, distance as the thickness of the sheet rock, lath or plasterboard 26 supported on the wall studs and a lesser distance than the thickness of the coat of plaster T that is applied to the plasterboard.

Although not shown, it is usual for electrical outlet receptacles to be provided with interiorly disposed tabs on the top and bottom walls thereof in which threaded holes are formed to provide means for attaching a permanent cover plate to the receptacle. As will be shown by reference to Figure 3, if receptacle R is not provided with a temporary protective device such as my guard G, during the application of plaster T portions thereof are deposited within receptacle R, adhering thereto, covering the interiorly disposed tabs therein and frequently completely covering receptacle opening O. After the plaster dries, discovering the exact location of receptacle R may be difficult and, once found, the removal of plaster from the receptacle without damage to the finished plaster surface is a time-consuming operation.

Guard G should be an inexpensive article that may be disposed of after but a single use thereof. Accordingly, although sheet S may be made of any suitable semi-rigid material that is capable of being folded, heavy paper stock or cardboard is an appropriate material. Sheet S is substantially rectangular in configuration and has a pair of vertically extending parallel fold lines 28 formed therein each of which is spaced inwardly from a side edge 30 of said sheet. Fold lines 28 are spaced apart from one another approximately the same distance as the space between the interior surfaces of opposite receptacle side walls 10 and 12 to define a central area 32 of the same width as receptacle opening O.

The areas of sheet S between fold lines 28 and side edges 30 constitute two oppositely disposed side portions 34 of sheet S of the same or less width than the depth of receptacle R. Sheet S is foldable along fold lines 28 so that side portions 34 extend in the same direction rearwardly from the plane of central area 32 and substantially normal thereto. The distance between upper and lower
edges $36$ of side portions $34$ is the same as, or less than, the vertical spacing between the oppositely disposed interior surfaces of receptacle top wall $14$ and bottom wall $16$, so that said side portions are insurmountable within receptacle $R$ in frictional contact with the interior surfaces of opposite side portions of receptacle opening $O$. The distance between upper and lower edges $36$ of central area $32$ is greater than said interior vertical spacing of receptacle $R$ so that the extreme top and bottom areas of central area $32$ that lie between vertical edges $40$ that are prolongations of fold lines $28$ and prolongations of horizontal edges $36$ of said side portions define extended tabs $43$. Tabs $42$ rest on the top and bottom edges of receptacle opening $O$ when guard $G$ is in place in receptacle $R$, and prevent movement of said guard inward beyond the plane of opening $O$. It will be seen from Figure 1 that central area $32$ of sheet $S$ substantially completely occupies receptacle opening $O$ and consequently there is no possibility of plaster $T$ being deposited within receptacle $R$.

The locators $L$ for at all times indicating the position of receptacle $R$ during and after plastering comprise two sheets $44$ of a flexible material that will not deteriorate under the influence of moisture or the constituents of the plaster. A variety of synthetic plastic materials are suitable for this purpose. Each flexible sheet $44$ is an elongate rectangular member that is fastened along an inner edge $48$ by means of staples $45$, or other suitable fastening means, to one of side portions $34$ of sheet $S$ so that when said side portion is folded, flexible sheet $44$ turns in unison therewith to protrude outwardly to the front of guard $G$ a greater distance than the thickness of the coat of plaster $T$ to be applied, as is shown in Figure 3. As can be seen in Figure 2 of the drawing, when guard $G$ is in the flat, unfolded condition, flexible sheets $44$ overlap both central area $32$ and side portions $34$ of sheet $S$. The portion of sheet $44$ that overlaps side portion $34$ is of the same length as said side portion, having top and bottom edges $50$ that coincide with upper and lower edges $36$ of side portion $34$. The portion of sheet $44$ that overlaps central area $32$ is of the same length as said central area, having top and bottom edges $52$ that coincide with upper and lower edges $38$ of central area $32$. The distance between fold lines $28$ and outer edges $54$ of sheets $44$ is greater than the thickness of the coat of plaster $T$.

The manner of use of the invention is extremely simple. In the flat, unfolded condition, a stack of guards $G$ is easily packaged so as to be conveniently carried about on the job, or a single locality of such guards may be packaged with each receptacle $R$. Flexible sheets $44$ tend to reinforce foldable sheet $S$ so that the device is capable of withstanding rough usage and not be deformed to an extent making it unsuitable for use. After a receptacle $R$ has been fastened to a stud $24$ in the manner previously set forth, and after plasterboard $26$ is in place, side portions $34$ of a guard $G$ are folded and mounted into receptacle $R$, the inner portions of flexible sheets $44$ and side portions $34$ frictionally engaging the interior surfaces of receptacle side walls $10$ and $12$ to maintain guard $G$ in place. Sheet $S$ then is channel-shaped in cross-section, thus increasing the rigidity of central area $32$ to prevent rupture thereof when troweling pressure is applied thereon, while tabs $42$ prevent movement of guard $G$ inwardly of receptacle $R$. As plaster $T$ is applied, the flexible nature of sheets $44$ permits the surface area around receptacle $R$ to be troweled in the normal manner because, as is indicated in phantom line in Figure 5, sheets $44$ yield to contact with the plastering tool. At the same time sheets $44$ tend to prevent the depositing of plaster therebetween, and such plaster as does enter therebetween is prevented from entering receptacle $R$ by cover area $32$. If receptacle $R$ should become totally covered with plaster $T$, sheets $44$ nevertheless exactly indicate the outline and position of said receptacle.

After plaster $T$ is dry, guard $G$ may be removed merely by cutting through the plaster next to sheets $44$ and between the top and bottom edges thereof. The protruding portions of sheets $44$ may then be grasped to withdraw guard $G$, leaving the plaster adjacent the opening of receptacle $R$ with clean, straight edges.

Figure 4 shows a location guard $G'$ that is identical to previously described guard $G$ in all respects except as to size. Guard $G'$ is of such size as to present a substantially square outer area $32'$ of sheet $S'$ that is intended to cover the opening of a receptacle $R'$ of the size and shape commonly used to house a telephone or television outlet jack. The protruding flexible sheets $44'$ of said receptacle, designated generally as $R''$, is ordinarily used for ceiling fixtures and has a substantially octagonal opening $O'$ that is defined by four equal side walls $56$ situated at right angles to one another and four equal corner walls $58$ of lesser length than side walls $56$ and situated at an angle of $45^\circ$ to said side walls. Guard $G''$, that is intended for use with receptacle $R''$, is similar to guard $G$ except that center area $32''$ thereof is substantially square and it has four rather than two fold lines and side portions $34''$ formed thereof. Extended tabs $42''$ of sheet $S''$ are formed at the corners thereof and are adapted to abut corner walls $58$ of receptacle $R''$, and guard $G''$ is provided with four protruding flexible sheets $44''$ rather than two. Guard $G''$ is used in the same manner as guard $G$.

Although the forms of the invention herein shown and described are fully capable of achieving the objects and providing the advantages hereinafore enumerated, it is to be understood that they are merely illustrative of the presently preferred embodiment of the invention, and that they are not meant to be limited to the details of construction herein shown and described other than as defined in the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A locating guard for an electrical outlet receptacle for preventing entry of foreign material into said receptacle during the plastering of the surface in which said receptacle is located and for indicating the location thereof after said surface is plastered, including: a sheet of rigid cardboard material having at least two fold lines formed therein that define a central area of said sheet that has substantially the same configuration as an opening in said receptacle, which lines define at least two side portions of said sheet that can be folded to a position substantially normal to the plane of said central area, said side portions when so folded being adapted to be received in said receptacle in frictional engagement with interior surfaces thereof to maintain said guard in said receptacle with said central area thereof covering said receptacle opening; means on said guard for maintaining said central area in substantially the same plane as the edge of said receptacle opening; and a sheet of flexible material fastened to each of said side portions that projects outwardly from said receptacle beyond the plane of said central area a greater distance than the thickness of the plaster to be applied to said surface to at all times indicate the location of said receptacle, which flexible sheets are yieldable to movement therewith against a trowel.

2. A device as defined in claim 1 in which said rigid sheet is substantially rectangular in configuration and has a pair of parallel fold lines spaced inwardly from opposite edges thereof to define a pair of elongate rectangular side portions that are foldable in the same direction away from said central area to position said rigid sheet on the plane thereof, with the spacing between said side portions being substantially equal to the spacing between opposite interior surfaces of said receptacle so that said side portions can frictionally engage said interior surfaces to hold said guard in said receptacle.

3. A device as defined in claim 1 in which said rigid sheet is substantially rectangular in configuration and has four fold lines formed therein each of which is spaced...
inwardly from an edge of said member to define two pairs of oppositely disposed elongate rectangular side portions that are foldable in the same direction away from said central area to positions substantially normal to the plane thereof, with the spacing between opposite side portions being substantially equal to the spacing between corresponding opposite interior surfaces of said receptacle so that said side portions can frictionally engage said interior surfaces to hold said guard in said receptacle; and said means comprise a corner tab at each corner of said rigid sheet.

4. A locating guard for an electrical outlet receptacle for preventing the entry of foreign material into said receptacle during the plastering of the surface in which said receptacle is located and for indicating the location thereof after said surface is plastered, including: a cover for said receptacle that is a sheet of rigid cardboard material of substantially the same configuration as an opening in said receptacle; means on said cover for frictionally maintaining it on said receptacle over said opening and in substantially the same plane to seal said receptacle against the entry of any foreign material therein; and locators on said guard that comprise at least two sheets of a flexible material pivotally connected to opposite edges of said cover, each of which sheets are movable to a position substantially normal to the plane of said cover in which said locators project outwardly from said receptacle a greater distance than the thickness of the plaster to be applied to said surface to at all times indicate the location thereof, with said sheets being yieldable to movement of a trowel thereagainst.

5. A locating guard for an electrical outlet receptacle for preventing entry of foreign material into said receptacle during the plastering of the surface in which said receptacle is located and for indicating the location thereof after said surface has been plastered, including: a cover that is formed of a substantially rectangular sheet of rigid cardboard material having two parallel fold lines formed therein, each of which fold lines is spaced inwardly from opposite edges of said cover to define two opposite side portions thereof, with said fold lines being spaced apart substantially the same distance as the space between opposite interior surfaces of said receptacle to define therebetween a central area of said cover of substantially normal to the plane thereof and are placed inside said receptacle, they frictionally engage the opposite interior surfaces of said receptacle, with said locators protruding outwardly from said receptacle a greater distance than the thickness of the plaster to be applied to said surface to at all times indicate the location thereof, said locators being yieldable to movement of a trowel thereagainst.

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