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2013 CA Electrical Code – AFCI Requirements in Dwellings

1. New circuits require AFCI protection for the entire branch circuit if they supply any outlets in the following locations (210.12A):
 - Family rooms, dining rooms, living rooms, parlors, libraries, dens, bedrooms, sunrooms, recreation rooms, closets, hallways, or similar rooms or areas.
 - An “outlet” of a circuit can be a receptacle outlet, a lighting outlet, or a smoke or CO alarm outlet. A switch is not an outlet.
2. For new circuits, protection must be provided by a **combination type** AFCI circuit breaker. Older **branch feeder** AFCI breakers are not acceptable. The words “combination type” or “branch feeder” are written on the face of the circuit breakers.
3. **Outlet Branch Circuit (OBC)** AFCIs are now available. These resemble GFCI receptacle outlets, except that they say AFCI on their face. New circuits can be protected by OBC AFCIs if the OBC is the first outlet of the circuit and the wiring between an ordinary breaker and the OBC is either concrete-encased, metal conduit or steel-jacketed cable.
4. When existing circuits are modified, extended, or replaced, the wiring of that circuit must be protected by either a combination-type AFCI circuit breaker or by an OBC AFCI at the first receptacle outlet of the existing circuit (210.12B).
5. New wiring for hard-wired smoke and CO alarms requires AFCI protection which can only be supplied by a circuit breaker (R314.4). If the existing electrical panel is an older type that does not accept AFCIs, the panel must be replaced or be supplemented with a subpanel.
6. When a service is upgraded or relocated and sections of existing branch circuit wiring are replaced as part of the work, those branch circuits require AFCI protection when serving the areas listed above. *This does not apply to service upgrades where the panel is relocated and the length of wire to connect the original circuits to a new panel location is less than 6 feet.*
7. Most houses have one or more multiwire branch circuits, and some brands of AFCI breakers cannot be installed with those circuits.
8. Replacement receptacles in any of the areas listed in item 1 must have AFCI protection (406.4D4). This can be provided by a combination-type AFCI breaker, or by an OBC AFCI, or by an OBC AFCI in the same circuit and ahead of the replacement receptacle.