

# It's shocking what fire ants can do to electrical equipment.



**L**ike many other ants, fire ants frequently infest electrical equipment. They chew on insulation and can cause short circuits or interfere with switching mechanisms. Air conditioners, traffic signal boxes and other devices can be damaged. Fire ants also nest in housings around electrical and utility units. The ants move soil into these structures, which causes shorting and other mechanical problems. Overall, fire ants cause an estimated \$11.2 million in damages to electrical equipment annually in Texas.

If you discover a nest of fire ants in your electrical equipment, contact an electrician or a licensed pest control operator. They have the specialized products and training that are necessary to treat these sites safely and effectively.

***You can prevent fire ants from infesting your electrical equipment by:***

- Ensuring your yard remains free of imported fire ants by using the Two-Step Method (applying baits to entire yard and then treating individual, nuisance mounds) or other control method in heavily infested areas. In areas with just a few ant mounds (5 or more per 1/4 acre lawn), treat them individually to help preserve native ants.
- Being extremely careful when using any insecticide around electrical equipment. Always be sure to carefully read and follow label directions.

*For more information, contact your county Extension agent or the Web at <http://fireant.tamu.edu>*