

# Don't Cut the Third Prong

**T**he third prong on electric cords has a purpose! Marvin may think it's "about as useless as hair on a biscuit," but D-Wayne probably begs to differ. He's the one who was seriously zapped because Marvin snipped off the third prong to make a new plug fit into an old outlet.

Maybe we can better understand what Marvin has done if we think of electricity as water. When plugged in, the two flat prongs on a power cord allow the electricity to flow in and out of an appliance like water. This flow allows the appliance to operate. If there's a fault, or a break in the connection, the electricity looks for another path to ground.

This is where the third prong goes to work. Much like a hose will catch water from a dripping faucet, the third prong will provide a safe path for electricity that is leaking from an appliance. This helps protect equipment such as television sets and toasters and, more importantly, you.

Inside the outlet, the third prong attaches to a ground wire that usually connects to a ground rod at the electric service panel. In the event of a short circuit, electricity should flow to the ground rod instead of you.

Depending on the conditions, the path of electrical current flowing through a body can do a lot more than just shock. It can—and does—kill.

So, kids, don't be like our armadillo friend, Marvin. Never cut the third prong.

Cartoonist Keith Graves is a popular artist and author of children's books. Among his greatest hits are *Frank Was a Monster Who Wanted to Dance*, *Uncle Blubbafink's Seriously Ridiculous Stories* and *Loretta: Ace Pinky Scout*. He lives in Austin with his wife, Nancy, and the twins, Max and Emma.

