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Woman dies in freak electrical accident

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SHOAL CREEK – A woman died from electrocution last week while practicing the controversial art of fractal wood burning.

"This is not only the first case of electrocution I've seen, it's also the first time I've ever heard of anyone trying to do this," Lt. Joe Wood of the Cherokee County Sheriff's Of-

fice said. "It was a freak accident."

Michelle Elliot, 42, was in the basement of a home in the 6000 block of Candy Mountain Road around 2:50 p.m. Thursday when she sparked a high-voltage short circuit while engaged in fractal wood burning.

"It actually burned a necklace off of her neck," Wood said, adding that a ring was attached to the necklace. "When the ring came

off, it burned into the carpet. You could tell it got extremely hot."

Fractal wood burning is the art of burning lightning or tree-shaped figures into wood using high-voltage electricity. The electricity is generated by a transformer, usually from a microwave oven, a neon sign or an oil burner.

The transformers can create from 2,000-15,000 volts of electricity. Police say they found something

that resembled a microwave transformer powering the wood-burning unit in the basement.

The American Association of Woodturners has banned the use of fractal wood burning at all its events and has also banned articles regarding the use of a fractal burner in all of its publications. In January, the organization warned that 10 people had already died due to fractal burning. The report-

ed deaths range from hobbyist woodworkers to an electrician with many years of experience working.

"With fractal burning, one small mistake and you are dead," the association warned.

At the time of the accident last week, three other adults were in the house. Though foul play is not suspected, police await toxicology results to determine whether a medical episode led to her death.