

Electrical Safety

If used correctly, electricity is safe. But problems and misuse cause thousands of fires and injuries every year. Here are some guidelines to stay electrically safe, not sorry.

Outlets

Check for outlets with loose-fitting plugs, which can overheat and lead to fire. Replace any missing or broken wall plates. Put safety covers on all unused outlets accessible to children.



Cords

Make sure cords are in good condition-not frayed or cracked. Make sure they are placed out of traffic areas. Cords should never be nailed or stapled to the wall, baseboard, or another object. Do not place cords under carpets or rugs, or rest furniture on them.



Extension Cords

Check to see that cords are not overloaded. Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis; they are not intended as permanent household wiring. Make sure they have safety closures to help protect young children from shock and mouth burn injuries.

Plugs

Make sure your plugs fit your outlets. Never remove the ground pin-the third prong-to make a three-prong plug fit into a two-conductor outlet. This could lead to an electrical shock. Never force a plug into an outlet if it doesn't fit. Plugs should fit securely into outlets. Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances.



Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters

GFCIs can help prevent electrocution. They should be used in any area where water and electricity may come into contact. When a GFCI senses current leakage in an electrical circuit it assumes a ground fault has occurred. It then interrupts power fast enough to help prevent serious injury from electrical shock. Test GFCIs regularly, according to the manufacturer's instructions, to make sure they are working properly.

Circuit Breakers/Fuses

Circuit breakers and fuses should be the correct current rating for their circuit. If you do not know the correct size, have an electrician identify and label the size to be used. Always replace a fuse with the same size fuse.



Light Bulbs

Check all bulbs in light fixtures to make sure they are the right wattage for the fixture. Replace bulbs if they are of higher wattage than recommended. If you don't know the correct wattage, check with the manufacturer of the fixture. Screw bulbs in securely; loose ones may overheat.



Water and Electricity Don't Mix

Don't leave appliances plugged in where they might make contact with water. If a plugged in appliance falls into water, don't reach in to pull it out, even if it's turned off. First turn off the power at the breaker, and then unplug the appliance. If you have an appliance that has gotten wet, don't use it until it has been checked by a qualified repairperson.

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Appliances

If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or has given you a shock, unplug it and have it repaired or replaced.

Entertainment/Computer Equipment

Make sure the equipment is in good condition and working properly. Look for cracks or damage in wiring, plugs, and connectors. Use a surge protector bearing the seal of a nationally recognized certification agency.



Space heaters

Space heaters are meant to supply supplemental heat. Keep them at least three feet away from combustible materials such as bedding, clothing, draperies, furniture, and rugs. Don't use in rooms where children are unsupervised, and remember to turn off and unplug when not in use.

Halogen Floor Lamps

Halogen floor lamps operate at much higher temperatures than standard incandescent light bulbs. Never place a halogen floor lamp where it could come in contact with draperies, clothing, or combustible materials. Turn the lamp off when you leave the room for an extended period of time, and never use in children's bedrooms or playrooms.

Outdoor Safety

Electric powered mowers and other tools should not be used in the rain, on wet grass or in wet conditions. Inspect power tools and electric lawn mowers before each use for frayed power cords, broken plugs, and cracked or broken housings. If damaged, stop using it immediately. Repair it or replace it. Always use an extension cord marked for outdoor use and rated for the power needs of your tools. Remember to unplug all portable power tools when not in use. Since metal ladders conduct electricity, watch out for overhead wires and power lines.



Lightning

During an electrical storm, do not use appliances such as hairdryers, toasters, or telephones. Do not take a bath or shower. Keep batteries on hand for flashlights and radios in case of a power outage, and use surge protectors on electronic devices and appliances.

Call Before You Dig

If you're going to dig a hole deeper than a foot (say, to build a fence or plant a tree), you must call first to see if there are any underground facilities in that spot. It's the law, and it can save you injury and property damage. Call the 24-hour toll-free number 811.



Irrigators

Look up! Before moving your pipe, make sure you won't contact any overhead power lines.

Links

Electric Safety Foundation www.esfi.org

Electrical Safety Forum www.electrical-safety.com