

10 STEPS TO ELECTRICAL SAFETY IN THE HOME

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), faulty home electrical wiring is responsible for 40,000 fires a year and results in the loss of 350 lives, thousands of electrical shock and burn injuries and more than \$2 billion in personal property damage. With electrical energy use typically on the rise during the warmer weather, the Leviton Institute advises that Spring is an excellent time to conduct a 10-step home electrical safety inspection.

Electrical Outlets: Check for loose-fitting plugs which can be a shock or fire hazard. Replace missing or broken wall plates so wiring and components are not exposed.

GFCIs: Make sure GFCIs are installed in your kitchen, bathrooms, workshop, basement, garage and outdoor areas where water and electricity are likely to come in contact. Test them monthly to ensure they work properly.

Plugs: Never force them into outlets. Don't remove the ground pin (third prong) to make a three prong plug fit a two-conductor outlet. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

Cords: Make sure they are not frayed or cracked, placed under carpets or rugs, resting on furniture or located in high-traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors or other objects.

Extension Cords: Use on a temporary basis only. They are not intended as permanent household wiring. Make sure they have safety closures to protect young children from shock hazards and mouth burn injuries.

Light Bulbs: Check the wattage to make sure light bulbs match the fixture requirements. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage ratings than recommended. Make sure they are screwed in securely so they don't overheat.

Circuit Breakers/Fuses: Fuses should be properly rated for the circuit they are protecting. If you don't know the correct rating, have an electrician identify and label the correct size to be used. Always replace a fuse with the same size you are removing. Check that circuit breakers are working properly.

Appliances/Electronics: If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or has given you an electrical shock, immediately unplug it and have it repaired or replaced. Look for cracks or damage in wiring, plugs and connectors. Use surge protectors to protect expensive electronics.

Outdoor Connections: Electric-powered lawn equipment and power tools should not be used in the rain, on wet grass or in wet conditions. Inspect for frayed cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housings. Always use an extension cord rated for outdoor use.

Service Capacity: Electrical systems can become overloaded. As you continue to upgrade your home with more lighting, appliances and electronics, your home's electrical service capacity may become overburdened. If fuses blow or circuit breakers trip frequently, you may need to increase your home's electrical service and add new branch circuits. A qualified, licensed electrician can determine the appropriate service requirements for your home and provide you with an estimate of the cost to upgrade. By following a few simple guidelines you can keep your home and family electrically safe.