

Is your home safe from electrical hazards?

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Your home is your castle, whether you live in a tiny studio apartment in the city or a sprawling mansion in the suburbs. But is your castle really as safe and secure as you think?

Most people don't realize the potential danger posed by electrical hazards hidden in the walls of their homes or lying unseen on their grounds. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, over 400 people are electrocuted in the United States every year. An additional 500 lives are claimed and nearly 1.6 billion in property damage is caused by electrically-related fires. Given these alarming statistics and with May as National Electrical Safety Month, now is a good time to follow this checklist from the Leviton Institute to ensure your "castle" is truly safe.

Don't overload outlets: With power strips and surge protectors, it's all too easy to add more appliances to an outlet than it was designed to handle. By overloading circuits you can create a fire hazard.

Outlets and Switches: Replace any outlet or switch that has broken parts or cracks, feels warm to the touch, or has plugs that hang loose.

Power Cords and Extension Cords: Examine power and extension cords for fraying or cracking. Replace taped-over cords, or those showing wear. Never run cords or extensions under carpets, rugs, or furniture, where damage might be hidden.

Use of Power Tools: Don't use power tools, even if they are properly grounded, in wet or damp spots.

Install GFCIs and Test Them Monthly: GFCIs (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters) have prevented hundreds of electrocutions and untold numbers of injuries since the early 1970s. The National Electrical Code requires GFCI-equipped outlets in rooms with a water source or damp ground such as kitchens, bathrooms, garages, laundry rooms, crawlspaces, and in outdoor locations like hot tubs or poolside, where they should be equipped with weatherproof covers. Testing them is simple. Just follow these three easy steps: 1. Plug a lamp or radio into the GFCI. Turn on the lamp or radio. 2. Press the TEST button. Lamp or radio should go off. If the lamp or radio doesn't go off, the GFCI is damaged or was miswired during installation. Please call a qualified electrician. 3. Press the RESET button. Lamp or radio should come back on. If the lamp or radio doesn't come back on, the GFCI is damaged and must be replaced. Please call a qualified electrician. If you are not sure that your GFCI is testing and resetting properly for any reason, play it safe and call a qualified electrician. Be sure to make your safety inspection a yearly habit and hire a licensed electrician to conduct an in-depth inspection every ten years.

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