



Your Home: Making Room for Electrical Safety



Electricity is a safe and reliable form of energy. However, it can be dangerous if not treated properly. The following is a checklist of items that you can use throughout your home to help protect your family.

Whole house:

- Make sure lightbulbs are the appropriate wattage for all fixtures.
- If small children are present, install covers on all unused outlets.
- Keep electrical cords away from foot traffic, and make sure they're not covered by rugs or furniture.
- Don't use extension cords on a long-term basis.
- Avoid plugging multiple devices into one outlet.
- All 15 and 20 amp circuit breakers in your electrical panel should have arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) capability to protect electrical wiring and your house from fire due to arcing.

Bathrooms:

- Never use electrical devices, such as radios or hair dryers, when the bathtub is being used.
- Install only ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protected outlets in the bathroom. GFCIs protect people from shock hazard.
- Unplug small appliances when not in use.

Kitchen:

- Unplug countertop appliances when not in use.
- Locate appliance cords away from heat sources, such as the stove or range.
- Make sure all kitchen outlets are GFCI protected.

Bedrooms:

- Avoid drinking liquid when using an electric blanket or heating pad.
- Don't cover an electric blanket when in use.
- Make sure electric blankets are in good condition; check for cracks or breaks in electrical cords.
- Turn off electric blankets and heating pads when not in use if they don't have a timer.

Basement:

- Keep the electrical panel free from obstructions, and make sure your hands and the floor are dry before touching the panel.
- Install GFCI protection in outlets located near clothes washers or wash tubs, or all outlets if it's damp.
- Place portable heaters and dehumidifiers on a stable and level surface, at least 3 feet from walls and other objects.

Outdoors:

- Install watertight covers on all outlets that protect the outlet even with a cord plugged in.
- Make sure all outdoor outlets are GFCI protected.
- Make sure power tools are in good condition and wires aren't cracked or frayed.
- Store power tools indoors to keep them from being damaged by water or excessive heat.
- When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant extension cords marked for outdoor use.
- Power lines may be underground as well. Before digging, call 811 to have utility lines marked.

These tips are for informational purposes only and aren't meant to supersede state or local building codes.

Contact the Building Department for information regarding requirements in our area. Remember that common sense and good safety habits are the best protection against electrical hazards.

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Energy-Saving Projects You Can Do Yourself



Looking to save money and improve the comfort of your home? There are a number of energy-saving projects you can do yourself. With a little time and effort, you can realize big savings on your energy bills.



Start simple

Where do you begin your personal quest for lower energy bills? How about changing a light bulb? ENERGY STAR®-certified LEDs use at least 75% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and last much longer.

Next, install WaterSense-labeled low-flow shower heads and faucet aerators. These typically cost less than \$20 to purchase and they can stop the drain on water and energy costs.



Energy-saving projects

Looking to take on a little more? Here are some easy, low-cost projects you can tackle yourself.

Install a programmable thermostat. A programmable unit saves energy by automatically adjusting temperatures while you are asleep or when you are away from home. Newer “smart” models provide advanced features, such as remote control and self-programming.

1. Select a location away from vents, windows or other sources of drafts.

2. Follow manufacturer’s instructions regarding proper installation.
3. Typically, thermostats only require low voltage wiring. Remember to shut off power before beginning work.

If the job requires more than just a simple replacement, consider contacting a qualified professional.

Weatherize doors and windows. Gaps and cracks in exterior doors and windows waste energy and reduce comfort. Sealing them can significantly improve heating and cooling system efficiency.

1. Look where the window frames meet the side of the house and check for gaps.
2. Make sure the area is clean and dry. If there is any existing caulk, scrape it out.
3. Spread the caulk evenly along the base of the crack and run a damp finger along the bead to smooth it out.
4. For doors, remove any existing weatherstripping and make sure area is clean and dry.
5. Cut the new weatherstripping and door sweep (if needed) to fit and press it into place for an even fit.

Air seal your attic. Leaks in unfinished attics can waste energy, even when adequate insulation is installed.

1. Locate all ceiling fans, recessed lighting fixtures and electrical outlets in the ceiling below your attic. Each of these is a potential source of air leakage.
2. From the attic, pull back the insulation to find the cutouts and seal them with caulk or expandable foam.
3. Check for and seal gaps around plumbing vents, furnace flues and ductwork.
4. Seal the attic access with weatherstripping.

Seal and insulate ducts. Furnace ducts can waste a substantial amount of energy. Sealing and insulating ducts can reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 20% or more, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

1. Use mastic tape to seal ductwork joints in unheated spaces, such as your attic, crawlspace or garage.
2. Wrap the ducts in insulation to increase their energy efficiency.
3. Seal and insulate any ducts you can access in the conditioned part of your house.

For bigger energy projects, such as adding insulation or installing a new heating system, contact a qualified professional.

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