

SAFETY TIPS

Day to Day Safety

Follow these electrical safety tips to protect your home, family and business:

- Wiring, fuses and breakers
- Electrical cords
- Electricity and water
- Appliance safety
- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)

Wiring, fuses and breakers

- If your electrical panel uses fuses, always replace a fuse with the right amperage fuse. Never substitute a higher amp fuse where a smaller one is called for, since this poses a fire hazard.
- Never change fuses in the dark or while standing on a wet floor.
- If you blow a fuse or throw a breaker by overloading a circuit, make sure that any appliances on that circuit are turned off or unplugged before you replace the fuse or reset the breaker.
- When your home or cottage was built, the electrical installation was inspected to ensure that it met the Electrical Safety Code at the time. Keep your wiring safe. If you add to it, be sure to have an electrical inspection.
- Check for rust on your fuse box caused by moisture. It can corrode connections, which can lead to overheating and fire.
- Never replace a burnt out fuse with a coin, even as a temporary measure. Doing so could start a fire.
- Use ‘P’ fuses for general lighting circuits and circuits to appliances like water heaters, baseboard or portable heaters and stoves.
- ‘D’ fuses have a built-in delay feature to handle power surges, which occur when heavy appliances are turned on. They should be used for freezers, air conditioners, clothes dryers and electric furnaces.

Electrical cords

- It’s important to use cords properly and keep them well maintained. Electrical cords are insulated to protect you from the electricity running through the wires inside. When an appliance or tool is on, these wires are “live” and could cause shock upon contact.
- Never use a tool or appliance with a frayed cord or where the insulation is nicked and wires are exposed.
- Keep cords clean to prevent insulation from deteriorating.
- Don’t wind cords tightly around an object; the stress could cause the small wires inside to snap or break.
- Never run cords under rugs. It conceals damage and can cause the cord to overheat and become a fire hazard.
- Never break off the third prong of a plug. The third prong (the round one) is a grounding wire put there for your protection; it provides a ground path that helps prevent or minimize shocks. Rather than breaking it off to fit an older outlet, replace a two-prong outlet with a three-prong one and make sure the third prong is properly grounded.

- Never nail cords to walls or floors. It punctures the insulation and can short out the wires.
- Never run cords behind radiators. Heat damage to the insulation can increase the risk of shock.
- Avoid “octopus outlets”! Clusters of wires and plugs may mean your electrical system can’t cope with your energy needs. It may be time to rewire and add circuits.

Electricity and water don’t mix!

- Be careful in the bathroom and near sinks; radios, hairdryers and other electrical appliances are hazardous if you use them near water. If your hands are wet or if you’re standing on a damp floor, you could get a serious electrical shock.
- Any plugs that are near sources of water should be GFCIs (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters).

Work safely with your electrical appliances

- Not all appliances on the market are safe. Electrical equipment that is poorly designed or manufactured can pose a serious shock or fire hazard. Look for a label such as Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC). They indicate that the product has been tested and meets the requirements of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code.
- Keep appliances in good working order. Check cords for damage, fraying or nicks. Never use a tool or appliance with a frayed cord or where the insulation is nicked and wires are exposed.
- Never handle electrical appliances or equipment with wet hands or while standing on wet ground or in water.
- Check plugs for bent or damaged prongs. Don’t break off the grounding prong on a 3-prong plug.
- Watch out for sparks – they’re a signal of potential danger. If you see any sparks, turn off and unplug your appliance immediately.
- Keep appliances clean. Clean the removable lint filter on your clothes dryer after each load. Dirt, dust or lint can make appliances unsafe to use; lint and dust are flammable.
- Always disconnect an appliance before cleaning it.
- If you bring used or second-hand appliances to your cottage, make sure they are still electrically safe.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)

Potentially fatal shocks can be caused by a ground fault in your electrical appliances and tools. A GFCI provides split-second electrical protection for you and your family – that’s why they are required by law in certain parts of your home.

All outdoor and bathroom electrical outlets in new and renovated homes must be supplied from circuits equipped with GFCIs. This included circuits serving swimming pools and hot tubs. They should also be considered for damp locations such as laundry rooms, basements and kitchens. Specially designed portable GFCIs can be taken from place to place to protect you anywhere.