



Know Your Home's Electrical System

Your home's electrical system helps provide your family with heat and A/C to be comfortable, appliances to make everyday tasks easier, entertainment to enjoy together, and light to extend your quality time well into the dark hours. It's important to know how your home's electrical system works, and what could be the cause if something goes wrong.

Circuit Breakers and Fuses

These devices protect the electrical wiring and equipment in your home from overloading. They are the safety valves of your home's electrical system. Breakers trip from overloads caused by plugging too many appliances into the circuit, or from a worn cord or defective appliance, starting an electric motor, or operating an appliance with a voltage requirement higher than what the circuit was designed to handle.

If a circuit trips repeatedly, unplug everything connected to it and reset it. If it stays on, one of the items you unplugged is defective and needs repair or replacement. If the circuit trips when nothing is connected to it, call an electrician as soon as possible.

Every house should have a master circuit breaker. It generally is located near the smaller circuit breakers. Tripping the master breaker cuts off electricity to the whole house. Circuit breakers may be reset by first switching the breaker to full off and then back to full on.

Ordinarily, small appliances that require personal attendance while operating may be plugged into any outlet. However, operating many small appliances or one large one on a single circuit can overload it. If this happens frequently, contact a licensed electrician to discuss whether your home needs additional wiring.

Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters

The receptacles in your kitchen, bathrooms and outdoors should be equipped with GFCIs. These safety devices are commonly installed where small appliances (such as hair dryers) are used near sources of water, which can "ground" a person and electrocute him or her if the appliance malfunctions or is dropped into water. GFCIs cut the flow of electricity to the appliance within a fraction of a second if they detect a change in the flow of current to (and from) the appliance.

One GFCI breaker may control up to four outlets. If a breaker trips during normal use, an appliance may be at fault. You will need to investigate the problem.

Test your GFCI receptacles monthly by pressing the "test" button. This will trip the circuit. To return service, press "reset."

For more home maintenance and safety advice, contact a licensed electrician at midshoreshomebuilders.com/member.asp or go to myhomepress.com for publications on current topics including social media, home design and more.



Choosing the Right Contractor It is essential to choose the right contractor to remodel or improve your home. Hiring a professional contractor means that they have the proper credentials & insurance, background, and knowledge to finish your project professionally. Under no circumstances should a consumer pull a permit from a local government. This puts the sole risk and liability on the consumer. Visit www.midshoreshomebuilders.com/consumers.asp for a [Checklist to Finding and Hiring a Builder or Remodeler](#).