

TORONTO SUN NEW HOMES & CONDOS

Don't be shocked if your home needs an electrical makeover



JANE LOCKHART
**DESIGN
CONFIDENTIAL**

With the average cost of a detached home reaching over \$1 million in the GTA, it's more important than ever to take care of your asset.

We tend to take a lot of home safety issues for granted, but here's some news... it's time to plug in to some electrical safety knowledge.

Almost half of all home fires (48%) in Ontario are caused by an electrical issue. When a home's electrical system hasn't been updated in 50 years, the odds of a fire risk greatly increase.

Data gathered by Birnie Electric's EHD (Electrical Hazard Detection Program) confirms that 99% of older homes inspected harbour electrical defects! Yes, 99%. Almost half of those pose a shocking hazard.

So, let's start with your home. Did you get a home inspection when you bought it? One of the downfalls of being in a hot real estate market is homeowners choose to forego home inspections for fear of losing out on their dream home.

Without an inspection, you're blindly trusting all the work previously done (or neglected) by previous owners.

An older home that appears to be in good shape may be hiding some old wiring that's beginning to decay behind the walls. Wiring is commonly insulated but may become worn by heat from overloaded sockets.

This is a common problem in older homes where there are fewer sockets in a room. Old knob and tube wiring from last century is also vulnerable to wearing out and should be replaced.

As a designer, when taking on a new build or renovation project we always work with licensed electricians, with approved plans and permits to ensure everything is safe before and after the walls go up. Here are some of the issues we regularly see and you should be aware of.

If you live in a home that was built in the '60s or '70s, it may contain aluminum and/or copper wiring. Aluminum

wiring doesn't need to be replaced, but it does require bridging between it and the electrical source with a copper connector.

Receptacles and switches should also be replaced with ones that are suited to aluminum wiring. Building standards are constantly being updated and in the 70's GFCI's were introduced. GFCI's (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters) prevents ground faults and shocking hazards.

Any switch near water must be a GFCI. It's even suggested these receptacles are updated by a professional every ten years.

Are you using multiple extension cords? Overloading power bars? Although, with more ports you can add more electronic devices, they're all still feeding from one circuit, with its existing ampage.

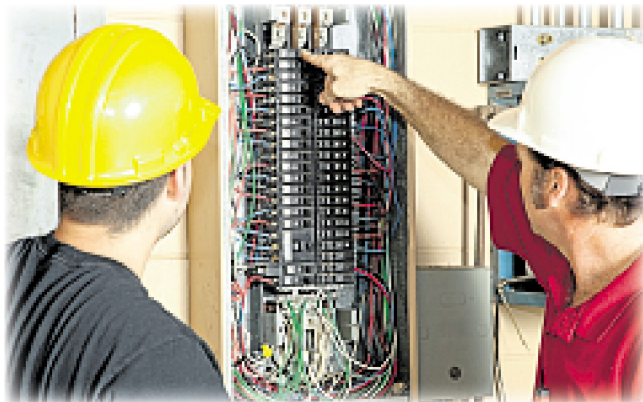
Overloaded power bars can overheat and become a fire hazard so consider the 'octopus' as a sign that you probably need your electrical infrastructure updated.

Where did you get that extension cord? Make sure it's from a reputable dealer. Avoid purchasing electrical supplies from discount stores, they may not meet Canada's safety regulations.

Select a power bar with a UL or ETL insignia, that means it's been tested by an independent agency to guarantee its safety; and that your power bar is outfitted with an internal circuit breaker to automatically shut off if overloaded.

Keeping your home and family safe should be a priority by ensuring your electrical is working at its best. To learn more visit www.ismyhome-safe.ca, it's a user-friendly website that addresses electrical safety. Don't wait for a reason to learn all you can.

— Jane Lockhart is an award-winning designer and TV personality and is considered one of Canada's leading experts in the world of design. Visit www.janelockhart.com.



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Data confirms that 99 per cent of older homes inspected harbour some form of electrical defects.



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