

Watt Wisdom

What to know about electrical safety



**Electrical safety
starts at home,
inside and out!**

**Clark
Public
Utilities** 



What to know about electrical safety

Electricity is one of those things we often take for granted — until there's a power outage and the lights go out, the washing machine stops running and the television screen goes dark.

Electricity has changed the way we live, and because it's invisible to us we often forget about its power. Most people realize it's important to stay away from high-voltage power lines, but it's just as important to take some basic safety precautions inside your home to avoid harm. If you have questions about any of the tips in this brochure, call us at 360-992-3000.

What to know about electrical safety

Outdoor safety



- If you see a power line that has fallen to the ground, always assume it's "live" and dangerous. NEVER touch any power line, even if it's not sparking or you think it's safe. Report downed lines immediately to us at 360-992-8000 or 360-992-3000.
- Be careful not to touch overhead power lines with ladders and other equipment. If a kite gets tangled in our lines, call us at 360-992-3000 — we'll remove it for you.
- Many utility lines are located underground. Before you do any digging on your property, please check to see where underground lines are located. Call 811 or 1-800-425-5555 at least two working days before you plan to dig, and all affected utilities will send workers to mark each line. This is a FREE service.
- Landscape carefully around electrical equipment. We have information about trees you can plant safely under power lines and the types of landscaping that work best around electrical equipment in your yard. Call us or visit our website for more information.
- Never attach signs or other items to utility poles. These attachments can damage the pole and are hazardous to utility employees who must climb the pole. They're also illegal.
- Our substations are fenced and locked because the high-voltage equipment inside is very dangerous. If you accidentally throw a ball or something else into a substation, please call us at 360-992-3000 and we will retrieve it for you.

Indoor safety tips

Electric cords:

- When unplugging a cord, pull on the plug, not the cord.
- Repair or replace damaged cords.
- Don't place cords where someone can easily trip over them or where people will be walking on them (*under carpets, across doorways, etc.*).
- When operating power tools, be sure to keep the cord away from the tool.
- Don't coil appliance or extension cords while they're in use.
- Avoid using extension cords when possible. If you must use an extension cord, pick one that is at least as large as the appliance's cord. If more than one appliance is being connected to the cord, add the individual amp ratings of the appliances together and check that sum against the amp rating of the cord.
- Select the appropriate extension cord for the equipment being used. For example, use a three-wire extension cord with an appliance that has a three-wire cord, and use a moisture-resistant cord outside.
- Unplug extension cords when not in use.
- Don't use extension cords as substitutes for permanent wiring.

Lighting:

- Use bulbs of the appropriate wattage in fixtures and lamps. Using a higher wattage bulb than recommended can overheat the fixture and may lead to fire. A 60-watt bulb is the highest wattage allowed in most standard fixtures. Newer energy efficient bulbs like compact fluorescent or LED bulbs can achieve the same brightness with much lower wattage.
- Don't place insulation over recessed lighting.
- Don't place anything combustible near halogen lamps and keep lamps away from walls and curtains.

Small appliances:

- Fully assemble appliances before plugging them in.
- Never use an electric appliance around or in a wet area.
- Teach children not to touch appliances with wet hands.
- Keep combustible or flammable materials away from heating appliances.
- Unplug small appliances when you've finished using them.
- Never leave operating portable heating equipment unattended.

Christmas lights:

- When buying Christmas tree or holiday lights, be sure the set carries the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) seal of approval.
- Check all the sets before using. Look for broken or cracked sockets, exposed wires or filament wires that haven't been trimmed properly (with the bulb in place, check between the bulb holder and socket for thin, hair-like exposed wires).
- Never attach lights to metal trees.
- Unplug lights before leaving home or going to bed. Unplug the lights at the outlet rather than where the lights join an extension cord.
- Don't overload extension cords.
- Keep all electrical cords away from the tree's water supply.
- Don't use indoor lights outside your home. Use only lights and extension cords designed for outdoor use.
- Consider LED lights, which use less energy and create less heat.

Other in-home tips:

- Be sure that fuses and circuit breakers used inside your home have the minimum amp ratings for the connected load.
- Never overload a wall outlet with too many appliances.
- Look for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) seal of approval when buying electrical equipment or appliances. Make sure the seal applies to the entire appliance, not just the plug or cord.

If you have any questions, call 360-992-3000 and speak with a Clark Public Utilities customer service representative. You can call for information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Fuses and circuit breakers

Fuses and circuit breakers are devices that shut off electricity whenever too much power tries to flow through a wire. The “overloading” can have many causes, from too many lights or appliances on one circuit to a defective part in an appliance. If a breaker flips or a fuse blows in your home, try to find the cause and correct it.

Then follow these steps:

For fuses:

1. Pull the main switch.
2. Replace the burned-out fuse with a new one of the correct size.
3. Turn on the main switch.
4. If the fuse blows again, try to find the cause.
5. If you can't find the cause, call an electrician.

For circuit breakers:

1. Reset the switch.
2. If the breaker flips again, recheck for the cause.
3. If you can't find the cause, call an electrician.

What to do in an electrical fire

If an appliance catches fire:

- Unplug the appliance, if possible, or turn off the power at the breaker box.
 - Use a Class C or multi-purpose dry chemical fire extinguisher or common baking soda on the fire.
- NEVER USE WATER.**

How to help someone in electrical shock

If someone has come into contact with low-voltage electricity (for example, anything used indoors), turn off the power. This may include pulling the plug, turning off the switch and/or flipping the breaker. If someone has come into contact with an energized outdoor power line, call 911 first and then call Clark Public Utilities at 360-992-8000 or 360-992-3000. Do not touch or attempt to free the person. Wait for experienced help to arrive.



Learn more at
clarkpublicutilities.com or 360-992-3000

