

Wisconsin Home Electrical Safety Checklist

Use this checklist to identify potential electrical hazards in your home. Check each item and note any concerns. If you find warning signs, contact a licensed electrician for a professional inspection.

Kitchen

- Test all GFCI outlets near sinks and countertops**
Warning sign: GFCI does not trip when you press the TEST button, or does not reset.
Action: Replace the GFCI outlet immediately. This is a critical safety device.
- Check that all countertop outlets are GFCI-protected**
Warning sign: Standard outlets (no TEST/RESET buttons) within 6 feet of water sources.
Action: Have a licensed electrician install GFCI outlets. Required by Wisconsin code.
- Inspect appliance cords for damage or fraying**
Warning sign: Cracked insulation, exposed wires, burn marks, or warm plugs.
Action: Replace damaged cords immediately. Never tape over damaged wiring.
- Verify dedicated circuits for major appliances**
Warning sign: Breaker trips when running dishwasher and microwave simultaneously.
Action: Schedule an electrician to install dedicated circuits for major appliances.

Bathroom

- Test all bathroom GFCI outlets**
Warning sign: GFCI does not trip or reset properly.
Action: Replace immediately. Bathrooms require GFCI protection by code.
- Check for proper ventilation fan operation**
Warning sign: Fan is noisy, runs slowly, or does not remove moisture effectively.
Action: Clean or replace the fan. Poor ventilation causes moisture damage and mold.
- Ensure no extension cords are used in wet areas**
Warning sign: Extension cords running to hair dryers, heaters, or other appliances.
Action: Install additional outlets. Extension cords near water are a shock hazard.

Living Areas & Bedrooms

- Test all smoke detectors and CO detectors**
Warning sign: Detectors do not sound when tested, are over 10 years old, or are missing.
Action: Replace batteries or entire units. Wisconsin requires detectors on every level.
- Check for warm or discolored outlets and switch plates**
Warning sign: Outlet covers are warm to the touch, discolored, or show scorch marks.
Action: Stop using the outlet and call an electrician immediately. This indicates arcing.
- Look for overloaded outlets and power strips**
Warning sign: Multiple power strips daisy-chained together, outlets with too many plugs.
Action: Reduce the load and have additional circuits installed if needed.
- Check for flickering or dimming lights**
Warning sign: Lights flicker frequently, especially when appliances turn on.
Action: May indicate loose connections or overloaded circuits. Have it inspected.
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Verify all outlets have proper grounding (3-prong)

Warning sign: Two-prong outlets, especially in older homes.

Action: Ungrounded outlets are a shock risk. An electrician can add grounding.

Electrical Panel

- Open the panel and look for signs of damage**
Warning sign: Rust, corrosion, burn marks, melted wires, or a burning smell.
Action: Do not touch anything inside. Call a licensed electrician immediately.
- Verify panel is properly labeled**
Warning sign: Breakers are not labeled or labels do not match actual circuits.
Action: Have an electrician map and label all circuits for safety and convenience.
- Check for double-tapped breakers**
Warning sign: Two wires connected to a single breaker that is not rated for double-tap.
Action: This is a code violation and fire hazard. An electrician must correct it.
- Confirm panel amperage meets your needs**
Warning sign: Home has 60 or 100 amp panel but many modern appliances and devices.
Action: Consider upgrading to a 200-amp panel for safety and capacity.
- Check if panel is a recalled brand (Federal Pacific, Zinsco)**
Warning sign: Panel label reads "Federal Pacific Electric", "Stab-Lok", or "Zinsco".
Action: These panels have known safety defects. Replace as soon as possible.

Exterior & Garage

- Test outdoor GFCI outlets**
Warning sign: GFCI does not trip or outlets are not weatherproof.
Action: Install weatherproof GFCI outlets. All outdoor outlets require GFCI protection.
- Inspect outdoor wiring and fixtures for damage**
Warning sign: Cracked conduit, exposed wires, or water inside light fixtures.
Action: Damaged outdoor wiring is a shock and fire hazard. Have it repaired promptly.
- Check garage outlets and wiring**
Warning sign: Ungrounded outlets, exposed wiring, or lack of GFCI in garage.
Action: Garages require GFCI outlets. Have an electrician upgrade if needed.
- Verify generator transfer switch operation (if applicable)**
Warning sign: Transfer switch does not engage properly or shows corrosion.
Action: Schedule annual generator maintenance including transfer switch inspection.

When to Call a Professional

- Any burning smells near outlets, switches, or your electrical panel
- Frequently tripping breakers or blown fuses
- Sparking when plugging in or unplugging devices
- Outlets or switches that are warm or hot to the touch
- Buzzing or humming sounds from your electrical panel
- Lights that flicker persistently across multiple rooms
- Any home older than 40 years that has never had an electrical inspection

Questions? Call Couillard Electric at (262) 618-2851 for a free electrical safety inspection.

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