# When it Comes to Electrical Safety, Knowledge is the Best Kind of Power.

The electric charge which flows into your property through electric circuits carries enough power to cause serious personal injury—electric shock, burn, even death. In addition to personal injury, electrical fires can also cause significant and often irreversible damage to property. These fires are extremely dangerous because they often start undetected in concealed spaces and by the time you see smoke, the space behind your walls can be fully engulfed.

**Some of the common electrical hazards found in buildings include:**

- old or poor wiring
- loose connectors
- storing combustible materials in electrical rooms
- using extension cords which are susceptible to mechanical damage and wear and tear. Extension cords introduce a trip hazard and the breakdown of the insulation material can result in overheating and fire
- lack of preventive devices such as polarized plugs, three-pronged outlets, and fault circuit interrupters.

According to the 2013 Ontario Electrical Safety Report[1], from 2003 to 2012, Ontario reported 23,460 loss fires and 3,511 no loss fires for a total of 26,971 fires in which electricity was identified as the ignition source for the resulting fire.

The good news is that steps can be taken to help prevent electrical accidents. Regular maintenance of electrical systems will keep them in good operating condition, and if issues are found, they can be repaired before problems arise. This is especially important in heritage buildings that likely have older wiring. In many cases, owners of heritage properties must upgrade wiring to bring it up to code and ensure the building is safe. When such repairs are required, it is important to hire a licensed and qualified electrician.

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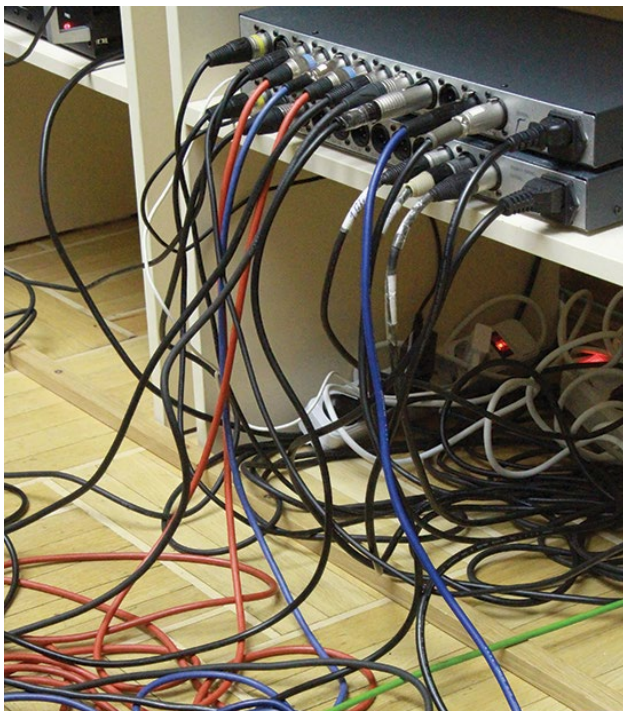
# The following are some best practices for ensuring electrical safety:

## DO

- ✓ Keep electrical rooms cool, clean, dry, and free of combustible materials.
- ✓ Install permanent outlets in places where you are currently using multi point adaptors.
- ✓ Purchase appliances with an automatic shut-off.
- ✓ Unplug kettles, coffee makers, toasters, electric heaters, etc. when not in use.
- ✓ Use electrical heaters only if they have been approved by a recognized testing agency such as ULC or CSA.
- ✓ Protect computers, sound systems, and other valuable electronic equipment with surge protection devices.
- ✓ Make sure that each piece of equipment has enough space around it so that air can circulate freely to avoid overheating.
- ✓ Restrict access to electrical rooms.

## DO NOT

- ✗ Use the electrical room for storage.
- ✗ Lock circuit breakers or tape them open to prevent nuisance trips. They can be locked open for safety reasons if an electrician is working on the circuit. Fire alarm and fire pump circuit breakers can be lockable in the closed position according to the Canadian Electrical Code—Rule 32-206.
- ✗ Overload receptacles with power bars or multi-point connectors.
- ✗ Use outlets or cords that have exposed or frayed wiring.
- ✗ Use extension cords for power tools or large appliances that are not suitably rated.
- ✗ Place extension cords in an area where they could be a tripping hazard.
- ✗ Store combustibles within one metre of an electric heater.



**For more information and related Risk Control Bulletins, visit www.ecclesiastical.ca**

### References


1. Ontario Electrical Safety Report 2013 http://www.esasafe.com/corporate/safety/ontario-electrical-safety-report-2013

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