



Outdoor Electrical Safety Tips

These helpful hints are brought to you by The Home Depot and the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

Outdoor Electrical Safety: Working in the Yard Shouldn't Be a Shocking Experience

Most of us think that we know enough about electricity to stay safe. After all, we are surrounded by it and use it everyday. However, each year hundreds of people die, thousands are injured and millions of dollars in property damage are caused by electrical hazards that could have been avoided.

Whether you are just headed out to do a little work in the yard or are off to take on more ambitious outdoor projects, following these few tips can help protect you, your home and your family from harm.

Equipment Safety

- Inspect electric tools for damage to cords, plugs and wiring. Take the tool to a qualified professional for repair.
- Protect yourself from injury. Turn the electric tool off, unplug it and put it in the "lock" position when carrying or connecting attachments such as mower baskets or saw blades.
- Never leave electric tools unattended where children or other unqualified adults can misuse it.
- Store electric tools indoors to keep them protected from damage caused by water and excessive heat.

Protect Yourself

- Safety devices on yard and other outdoor electric tools are there for a reason. Make sure that they are always in place before operating.
- Invest in safety goggles, hearing protection, dust masks, gloves and other safety equipment as recommended for each tool.
- Wear the appropriate clothes for the job.

Never Take Electricity For Granted

- A GFCI outlet will automatically disconnect power when a plugged in electric decoration comes in contact with water or begins to "leak" electricity.
- The National Electric Code now requires GFCIs in bathrooms, garages, kitchens and outdoor outlets.
- Protect outlets from the elements by making sure that they are covered when not in use.
- To help prevent electrical fires, keep dry leaves and other debris swept away from outdoor lighting, outlets and power cords.

Extension Cords Safety

- When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant heavy gauge extension cords marked “for outdoor use.” These weather resistant cords have added safeguards designed to withstand the outdoor environment.
- Examine cords before each use. Damaged cords should be replaced immediately.
- Extension cords are for short term use and not for long term power solutions.
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strands clear of snow and standing water, and well protected from the elements.
- Keep your work area clean and free from debris.

Power Lines: Working Safety Around Them

- Use wooden or fiberglass ladders when working near electrical wiring. Metal ladders conduct electricity.
- Check the surrounding area to ensure that you will not accidentally come in contact with overhead power lines.
- Remember that power lines are underground as well. Before you dig to plant a tree or put in a fence, call 811 to have them come and mark all of the utility lines.

Generators Safety

- Check smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors monthly.
- Never operate the generator in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. Use carbon monoxide detectors in nearby enclosed spaces to monitor levels. Generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide very quickly, which can be deadly.
- Do not connect generators directly to household wiring without an appropriate transfer switch installed. Power from generators connected directly to household wiring can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including lineworkers making repairs.
- Make sure your generator is properly grounded.
- Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to help prevent electrocutions and electrical shock injuries.
- Keep the generator dry.
- Make sure extension cords used with generators are rated for the load, and are free of cuts, worn insulation, and have three-pronged plugs.
- Do not overload the generator. A portable generator should be used only when necessary, and only to power essential equipment or appliances.
- Make sure fuel for the generator is stored safely, away from living areas, in properly labeled containers, and away from fuel-burning appliances. Before re-fueling, always turn the

generator off and let it cool down.

- Turn off all appliances powered by the generator before shutting down the generator.
- Keep children away from portable generators at all times.



ESFi reminds everyone that electricity is a powerful tool. It can also be a lethal hazard. Better safety standards have reduced electrical hazards that cause deaths, injuries and property damage. But good safety habits are still the best prevention against electrical hazards.

For additional electrical safety information, visit the foundation's web site at www.electrical-safety.org or call 703-841-3229.