



Homeowner Electrical FAQ's

Before contacting our Customer Service department for service, please be sure to read through the following questions and answers and try the suggested solutions.

1. Why do the lights seem to blink or dim temporarily when I use the outlets in the house?

General lighting outlets are throughout your home. They are meant for low current type uses, such as lamps, radios, or clocks. When large cord-connected motors are plugged in, such as a vacuum, the startup surge current for the motor can cause the lights, which are on that circuit, to blink or dim. All circuits have potential for this occurrence. To minimize dimming, plug the large load items into circuits dedicated for this such as the kitchen, dining room, nook laundry room or bathroom.

2. Why does the breaker trip so easily?

All circuits in the panel operate on the same principle. A 15 amp circuit has 1800 watts available. A 20 amp circuit has 2400 watts available. A typical 13 amp vacuum uses at least 1200 watts. When the wattage is exceeded while in use, it will overload and “trip” the breaker. The same is true in the kitchen. The small appliance circuit is 20 amps or 2400 watts. When two or more items are in use, such as a toaster and a coffee pot, the breaker can easily trip. When the breaker trips, it is actually doing its job.

3. Why do some of the switches not turn anything on?

Some switches operate only on a switched outlet. It may also be a “pre-wire” for a future paddle fan or light that was requested.

4. Why do the top plugs of some outlets not work?

If a room does not have an overhead light, it will usually have a switched outlet. The switched outlet is meant for a lamp. A light switch on the wall will control the

switched outlet. When the switch is in the “on” position, the outlet will have power and turn on whatever is plugged into it. On a duplex outlet usually only one of the outlets is switched.

5. Why does the whole house fan come on by itself or seem not to work?

Most whole house fans are on a 24 hour timer system. The whole house fan comes on to remove the stale air in your home. Most timers have an “auto” position where the fan works on a timer, a “manual” position where the fan stays on all the time, and an “off” position where it will not run until it is set on one of the other positions. Make sure that the timer is set to “auto” and then set the time (s) during the day you wish it to run.

6. Why do shower can lights or other can lights quit working?

All can lights have a thermal cutout (heat sensor). When a bulb is installed that has too high of a wattage rating, it could overheat the can. The thermal cutout turns power off to the can to prevent overheating conditions. When the can cools, the thermal cutout will restore power and the light will come back on. This cycle will continue until the correct bulb wattage is put in. Refer to the inside of the can light for this maximum wattage for the fixture.

7. Why do my smoke detectors chirp?

A smoke detector’s chirp indicates that the batteries need to be replaced. The batteries should be replaced every year regardless of whether they chirp or not.

8. Why are the bedroom lights or outlets not working?

All the lights and outlets in bedrooms are protected by Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter (AFCI) breakers. This is a special breaker that is installed in the electrical panel. If the lights or outlets in any bedroom are not working, check the electrical panel to see if any of the AFCI breakers are tripped. If they are, reset the breaker. A switched outlet is often found in a bedroom (refer to #4).

9. Why did the kitchen, dining room or nook outlets quit working?

These outlets are protected by a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlet. When there is a problem with a device plugged into the GFCI outlet, it will trip. To resume power to all the outlets on the circuit, press the reset button on the GFCI outlet. If the GFCI does not reset, try unplugging all of the items that are plugged into the outlets on that circuit and then reset the GFCI outlet. If this does not activate power, check your electrical panel in your garage. Find the breaker responsible for that area of the house that has no power and reset the breaker.

10. Why did the bathroom outlets quit working?

These outlets are also GFCI protected and should be reset in the same manner as #10.

11. Why did the outside weatherproof outlet quit working?

This outlet is GFCI protected and located in the weatherproof cover on the outside of your home. Sometimes a GFCI outlet in the garage will power an outside outlet. Remember this is the inoperable outlet up high, such as the Christmas eave outlet, there is often a switch operating that outlet. The switch needs to be in the “on” position for the outlet to work. Weatherproof outlets are not on a dedicated circuit, they are easily overloaded by outside appliances such as electric garden tools.

12. Why is there no power to a circuit and/or multiple lights are dead in my house?

Check the circuit breaker to see if it is tripped. To properly reset any breaker, first turn it off (this will be a stiff click). Then turn it back on. Sometimes when a breaker trips, it does not necessarily move the breaker switch to the off position. It must be switched off and back on to reset the tripped breaker.