

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT...

Tips for preventing electrical hazards in the home

With all the storms and power outages of late, it's difficult to remember a time when electricity — something most of us take for granted — was so keenly on people's minds. We thought it fitting to revisit some basic and, perhaps, not-so-obvious procedures for respecting the power of power.

Cableorganizer.com (a Web retailer that sells cable, wire and equipment management products) offers these tips for preventing electrical hazards.

Karen Klages



1 On the water front: What do you do if a plugged-in appliance (whether it's turned on or not) accidentally falls into a filled-up tub or sink? First, don't attempt to retrieve or unplug it. Go immediately to your home's panel board and shut off power to the corresponding

circuit. Only then can the appliance be safely unplugged and removed from the water. Don't use the appliance until it has dried thoroughly and been evaluated by an electrician.

Also: If you live in an older home that predates ground fault circuit interrupters, get them installed (a relatively minor fix) in your bathrooms, kitchen, garage, anywhere that electrical outlets and water are close together. GFCIs detect current leakages or ground faults in electrical circuits (which would occur when a powered device made contact with water) and shut off power to that receptacle almost instantaneously.

2 More about water: Don't do yard work with electrically powered tools in wet conditions — and that includes sprinkler-wet.

3 Listen to your appliances: If an appliance repeatedly trips a circuit breaker, blows a fuse or gives you shocks, it's telling you something is wrong. Have an electrician inspect it and make repairs before you use it again.

4 Size matters: Make sure you're using the right size circuit breakers and fuses, lest you run the risk of a failure. If you're not sure, have an electrician take a look at your panel box and label it with the right circuit breaker/fuse size for easy future reference.

5 Be kind to plates and cords: Replace missing or broken wall plates, which don't just hang there and look pretty but also protect your fingers from making contact with the live wires behind them. And treat power cords gently. Don't treat power cords gently. Don't nail or tightly tack them down. Check to make sure they're not pinched between or under furniture.

Karen Klages writes about home topics for the Chicago Tribune, a Tribune Publishing newspaper.

