

Warning signs of electrical problems



Homeowners know that owning a home provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Home ownership also can increase the chances individuals view their homes as a sanctuary where they can relax and enjoy creature comforts they've personally chosen.

The comfort people feel inside their homes can be compromised when they begin to suspect certain safety issues, including electrical problems. The Electrical Safety Foundation estimates that home electrical fires account for roughly 51,000 fires and 500 deaths each year. Electrical problems will not always cause home fires, but it's still wise for homeowners to learn the potential warning signs that something is amiss with their home electrical systems.

- **Flickering lights:** Flickering lights are more than a mere nuisance. Bulbs sometimes flicker because they become loose, which can be remedied by turning the fixture off, waiting for the bulb to cool down to the touch and then tightening it. However, if the bulb was already tight when it was flickering, then the ESFI warns this could be a sign of an overloaded circuit. The tech experts at CNET advise homeowners to contact a certified electrician if they suspect their home electrical circuit is overloaded.

- **Frequently tripped circuits:** In a day and age when people rely so heavily on electronic devices

like routers, desktop computers, tablets, smartphones, and more, a tripped circuit that cuts power to a home can be a major nuisance. But frequently tripped circuits indicate the presence of an electrical problem that's greater than a suddenly shut down computer or disconnected router. Tripping is actually a safety net that shuts down the electrical current of a home in order to let homeowners know something is wrong with their electrical system. Frequently tripped circuits should be brought to the attention of a licensed electrician, who can identify what's causing the system to alert homeowners something is amiss.

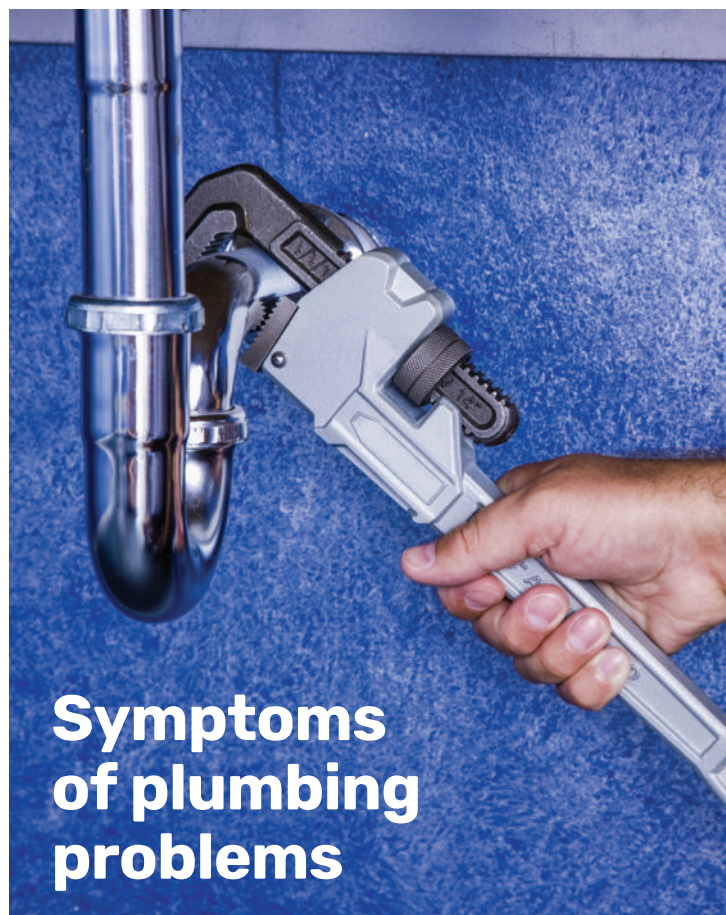
- **Warm or discolored wall plates:**

It may not be common practice to touch wall plates, but the ESFI notes this can be a good way to determine if a home is having electrical issues. Discoloration on the wall plates should be enough to draw homeowners' attention. Some wall plates may even appear to be melting. Each of these issues could be a byproduct of various problems, including damaged wiring. A certified electrician can determine what's behind warm and/or discolored wall plates.

- **Burning odor emanating from outlets:**

The unpleasantness of this warning sign of electrical problems is enough to compel an immediate investigation. Homeowners who detect a burning odor in their homes but aren't sure where it's coming from are urged to inspect their wall outlets. If the odor seems to be coming from an outlet, it could be due to various factors, including exposed wiring, poorly installed wiring, damaged wiring, or a foreign object in the outlet. Contact an electrician immediately if you detect a burning odor coming from an outlet.

Electrical issues in a home pose a serious safety risk. Homeowners should learn the warning signs of such issues and report their presence to a licensed electrician immediately.



Symptoms of plumbing problems

The drip of a faucet, the bang of pipes and the visible signs of a leak under the sink are some notable indicators of plumbing problems. Other, potentially serious issues may not be so evident. How can homeowners tell if they have potential plumbing problems? The following are some sights and sounds that indicate it is time to call in a plumber.

- **Banging or clanking:** Plumbers refer to these noises as water hammer. This is when a rush of water forces through the pipe and bumps into a closed valve, producing a metallic noise. Something is in the pipe that is restricting water flow. Over time, the flow of water meeting an obstacle could loosen pipe joints as the water tries to find an easier workaround.

- **Pipe discoloration:** If there is any sign of discoloration on pipes, particularly rust, it could be a symptom of a dripping sink or drain line that is slowly leaking. A slow leak can eventually turn into a big mess if left unattended.

- **Sewer smells:** Pipes need traps and vents. Traps are designed to

prevent sewer gas from entering the home, while vents channel sewer odor up to the roof. If there are sewer smells, it could mean a trap has dried out or a vent line is cracked, says Family Handyman.

- **Low water pressure:** If you turn on the faucet and the water pressure is poor, it could be the result of a clog or a leak somewhere in the system. Pipes that are improperly sized for a home also can affect pressure.

- **Sluggish drains:** Clearing drains is perhaps the only plumbing problem that homeowners should address themselves. More often than not, drains that fail to drain quickly have a blockage such as hair or other debris. If attempts to clear the drain do not work, it is best to bring in a professional plumber.

- **Shaking sounds:** Water can cause occasional noises, but if the sounds are frequent, the pipes are not secured firmly enough. A plumber will need to tighten the mounting straps or even completely replace them.

Plumbing issues are nothing to take lightly, as small problems can quickly escalate and cause thousands of dollars in damage.