

Electrical Panel Essentials

What Everyone Should Know About Their Electrical Panel

Your electrical panel is the central distribution point for many of the electrical circuits in your home, unit, or building. You don't need to know how to work on it, but knowing a few basics can be helpful when an electrical issue occurs.

Need Help Evaluating an Electrical Concern?

L.U. Electric, Inc. provides commercial and multifamily electrical service, maintenance, troubleshooting, lighting upgrades, and capital improvement work throughout Southern California.

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Scan to request service or schedule a property walkthrough.



Important Notice

This guide is intended for general awareness and is not an electrical inspection or troubleshooting procedure. Do not remove electrical panel covers or access internal components unless qualified and authorized. Electrical equipment should be evaluated and serviced by qualified personnel when concerns arise.

Know Where It Is

Make sure you know the location of your electrical panel **before** you need it. For apartment communities, this may include knowing the locations of unit panels, house/common-area panels, and main electrical rooms.

Keep It Accessible

- ☐ Don't block the panel with furniture, shelving, boxes, or stored materials.
- ☐ Keep electrical rooms clear and accessible.
- ☐ Make sure the panel door can open freely.
- ☐ Never use electrical equipment as a storage surface.

Know Your Circuit Directory

The directory inside the panel door identifies what each circuit breaker serves.

A useful directory should say:

- ☐ Kitchen Counter Receptacles
- ☐ Primary Bedroom
- ☐ Living Room Lighting

If your panel directory is missing, outdated, or inaccurate, consider having it properly identified and updated.

A Tripped Breaker Is Telling You Something

A circuit breaker can trip when there is a problem on the circuit. If a breaker *repeatedly trips*, don't continue resetting it. Have the cause evaluated by a qualified electrical professional.

Know the Warning Signs

Contact a qualified electrical professional if you notice:

- Burning or melted-plastic odors
- Buzzing, crackling, or popping
- Unusual heat
- Rust, corrosion, or signs of water intrusion
- Burn marks or discoloration
- Visible damage
- Repeatedly tripping circuit breakers

Smoke, fire, active arcing, electrical shock, or another immediate threat to safety requires immediate action. Keep away from the affected area and contact emergency services.

Don't Open the Panel to Investigate

Operating a circuit breaker from the normal front of a closed panel is very different from removing the panel cover.

Do not remove panel covers, touch exposed components, or attempt internal electrical work unless you are qualified and authorized to do so.

Take a Photo

Keep a clear photo of:

- The outside of the electrical panel
- The circuit directory
- Any identifying label that can be photographed safely

Having this information available can be helpful when requesting electrical service.

Quick Panel Check

- ☐ **LOCATION:** Do you know where your panel is?
- ☐ **ACCESS:** Can it be reached easily?
- ☐ **LABELS:** Is the circuit directory clear and current?
- ☐ **CONDITION:** Any visible damage, water, rust, unusual sounds, odors, or heat?
- ☐ **HISTORY:** Are any circuit breakers repeatedly tripping?