

Electrical Emergency Response Guide

A Quick-Reference Guide for Multifamily Property Management & Maintenance Teams

Electrical problems can escalate quickly. Knowing how to recognize warning signs, protect residents and staff, and provide the right information to responding professionals can help your team manage an incident more effectively.

When there is fire, smoke, electrical shock, downed power lines, or another immediate threat to life or property, contact emergency services first.

This guide is intended for general emergency response and does not authorize unqualified personnel to perform electrical work.

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.

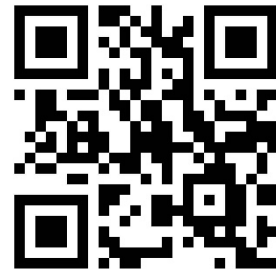
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Important Notice

This checklist is intended as a general property personnel resource and is not a substitute for formal electrical inspection, code evaluation, manufacturer-required maintenance, or testing by a licensed professional. Property conditions and maintenance requirements vary. Do not open electrical panels, remove equipment covers, touch exposed wiring, or perform electrical repairs unless properly qualified and authorized.

Know the Warning Signs

Treat the situation seriously when you encounter:

1. Smoke or visible fire
2. Sparking or electrical arcing
3. Burning or melted-plastic odor
4. Buzzing, crackling, or popping from electrical equipment
5. Electrical equipment that appears unusually hot
6. Burned, melted, or discolored receptacles/switches
7. Repeated circuit breaker trips
8. Water entering or surrounding electrical equipment
9. Exposed or damaged electrical conductors
10. Partial or complete loss of power
11. Damaged electrical equipment following a vehicle impact
12. Downed or damaged utility lines
13. Electrical shock or tingling sensation from equipment or metal surface

1. Smoke, Fire or Burning Odor

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ✓ Keep residents, employees, and others away from the affected area.
- ✓ **If there is fire, smoke, or immediate danger, contact 911/emergency services.**
- ✓ Follow the property's emergency evacuation procedures when appropriate.
- ✓ Contact the appropriate qualified electrical professional after the immediate emergency is addressed.
- ✓ Document where the smoke, odor, or fire was first observed.

DO NOT

- × Open electrical panels or equipment to look for the source.
- × Touch equipment that is smoking, sparking, or unusually hot.
- × Throw water on an electrical fire.
- × Re-energize equipment involved in the incident until it has been evaluated by qualified personnel.

REPORT

Be prepared to explain:

- Exact location
- What was seen or smelled
- Whether smoke or flames were present
- Whether power has been lost
- Whether emergency services responded
- Whether water is involved
- What equipment appears affected

2. Sparking, Arcing or Popping

An occasional tiny spark when inserting or removing a plug can have different causes, but continued sparking, visible arcing, popping, smoke, heat, or burning odor requires attention.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ✓ Stop using the affected device or equipment.
- ✓ Keep others away from the area.
- ✓ Contact qualified personnel for evaluation.
- ✓ Escalate immediately if smoke, fire, significant heat, or continued arcing is present.

DO NOT

- × Touch exposed wiring.
- × Remove covers to investigate.
- × Continue operating equipment to "see if it happens again."
- × Attempt repairs unless qualified and authorized.

3. Repeatedly Tripping Circuit Breaker

A circuit breaker that trips is providing an important warning. Repeated tripping should not be ignored.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ✓ Identify what area or equipment lost power.
- ✓ Note what was operating when the circuit breaker tripped.
- ✓ Disconnect or stop using suspect plug-in equipment if this can be done safely.
- ✓ Report repeated tripping for evaluation.

DO NOT

- × Continually reset a circuit breaker that keeps tripping.
- × Hold a circuit breaker in the ON position.
- × Replace a circuit breaker with a higher-rated breaker.
- × Open the panel or attempt internal repairs unless qualified and authorized.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

- What loses power
- How often it trips
- Whether it trips immediately or after some time
- What equipment was operating
- Whether new equipment was recently added
- Whether there is any odor, heat, buzzing, or visible damage

4. Partial Power Loss

Examples include:

- One apartment has only partial power.
- Several units lose power.
- One building or section of the property loses power.
- Power repeatedly comes and goes.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ✓ Determine the extent of the outage without opening electrical equipment.
- ✓ Ask whether neighboring units/buildings are also affected.
- ✓ Check whether the utility is reporting an outage when appropriate.
- ✓ Contact qualified electrical personnel if the issue appears isolated to the property.
- ✓ Treat unusual bright/dim lighting, burning odors, heat, or arcing as potentially urgent.

DOCUMENT

Affected Unit(2)			
Affected Building(s)			
Common Areas Affected:			
Utility Outage Reported?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unknown

5. Entire Building or Property Without Power

FIRST DETERMINE

- Is the entire property affected?
- Are neighboring properties or streetlights also without power?
- Has the utility reported an outage?
- Is only one building affected?
- Did anything occur immediately before power was lost?

NEXT STEPS

Widespread neighborhood outage:

- ☐ Contact/check the utility provider and follow property outage procedures.

Only your property/building is affected:

- ☐ Contact qualified electrical personnel for evaluation.
- ☐ Smoke, fire, arcing, explosion, or damaged equipment:
- ☐ Keep people away and contact emergency services when there is an immediate hazard.

DO NOT

- × Open main electrical equipment to investigate unless qualified and authorized.
- × Assume every complete outage is a utility problem.

6. Water Near Electrical Equipment

This is particularly important for multifamily properties after rain, plumbing leaks, irrigation failures, flooding, or pool equipment incidents.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ☐ Keep people away from standing water near electrical equipment.
- ☐ Restrict access to the affected area.
- ☐ Contact qualified personnel.
- ☐ If flooding creates an immediate electrical hazard, contact emergency services as appropriate.

DO NOT

- × Step into standing water to reach electrical equipment.
- × Touch wet electrical panels, switches, receptacles, or equipment.
- × Attempt to operate electrical equipment that has been submerged or exposed to significant water.
- × Equipment is safe simply because it still operates.

DOCUMENT

If it can be done from a safe location, photograph:

- Source/extent of water
- Affected electrical equipment
- Equipment labels
- Surrounding area

7. Vehicle Strikes a Light Pole or Electrical Equipment

This deserves its own section because it can happen in apartment parking areas.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ☐ Keep residents and bystanders well away from the damaged equipment.
- ☐ Treat exposed wiring and damaged electrical equipment as energized.
- ☐ Contact emergency services when there is immediate danger, injury, fire, or significant impact involving electrical equipment.
- ☐ Contact qualified electrical personnel.
- ☐ Contact the utility when utility-owned equipment may be involved.
- ☐ Secure the area from a safe distance until appropriate personnel arrive.

DO NOT

- × Touch or attempt to straighten the pole.
- × Touch exposed wires.
- × Move damaged electrical equipment.
- × Allow residents to walk or drive through the immediate area.
- × Assume a knocked-down light pole is de-energized because the light is off.

COLLECT WHEN SAFE

- ☐ Photos from a safe distance
- ☐ Pole/location number
- ☐ Approximate height of pole
- ☐ Building/parking location
- ☐ Vehicle/incident information according to company policy
- ☐ Approximate time of impact

8. Downed or Damaged Power Lines

TREAT EVERY DOWNED LINE AS ENERGIZED.

- ☐ Stay well away from the line and anything it is touching.
- ☐ Keep residents, staff, vehicles, and pets away.
- ☐ Contact 911/emergency services when there is an immediate public safety hazard.
- ☐ Contact the utility provider.
- ☐ Follow instructions from emergency and utility personnel.

DO NOT

- × Touch the wire.
- × Touch fences, trees, vehicles, puddles, or other objects in contact with the wire.
- × Attempt to move the line.
- × Drive over a downed line.

9. Electrical Shock

If someone has received an electrical shock:

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ☐ Do not touch the person if they may still be in contact with an energized source.
- ☐ Call 911/emergency medical services.
- ☐ Keep others away from the electrical source.
- ☐ Follow instructions provided by emergency personnel.
- ☐ Have the electrical equipment involved evaluated before it is returned to service.

DO NOT

- × Grab someone who is still in contact with an energized electrical source.
- × Touch exposed electrical equipment involved in the incident.
- × Return the affected equipment to service without appropriate evaluation.

10. Burned, Melted or Hot Receptacle/Switch

WATCH FOR

- Brown/black discoloration
- Melted plastic
- Burning odor
- Crackling/buzzing
- Unusual warmth or heat
- Sparking
- Plug that appears burned or damaged

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ☐ Stop using the affected device.
- ☐ Keep residents from using it.
- ☐ Report the condition for qualified evaluation.
- ☐ Escalate immediately if there is smoke, active arcing, or fire.

DO NOT

- × Plug something else into the receptacle to test it.
- × Continue using it because it "still works."
- × Cover up visible damage without addressing the cause.

11. Pool, Spa or Water Feature Electrical Concern

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ☐ Keep residents out of the water when an electrical problem is suspected.
- ☐ Restrict access to the affected area.
- ☐ Contact qualified personnel immediately.
- ☐ Escalate to emergency services if someone has received a shock or there is immediate danger.

WARNING SIGNS

- Tingling sensation
- Lights behaving abnormally
- Repeated protective-device trips
- Damaged underwater lighting
- Damaged electrical equipment
- Water intrusion into electrical enclosures

Do not allow use of the pool/spa until the electrical concern has been appropriately evaluated.

12. Electrical Equipment Buzzing, Crackling or Overheating

Electrical panels, disconnects, transformers, meter equipment, and other electrical systems should not be ignored when they suddenly begin making unusual sounds, producing odors, or showing signs of excessive heat.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

- ☐ Keep unauthorized personnel away.
- ☐ Note the exact equipment and location.
- ☐ Contact qualified electrical personnel promptly.
- ☐ Escalate if conditions worsen or smoke/arcing develops.

DO NOT

- × Open the equipment to locate the sound.
- × Touch equipment that appears unusually hot.
- × Ignore a new or worsening condition.

Before You Call: Gather This Information

Good information can help the responding electrician arrive better prepared.

- ☐ Property name and address
- ☐ Building and unit/area
- ☐ Onsite contact name
- ☐ Best onsite phone number
- ☐ Description of the problem
- ☐ When it started
- ☐ Whether it is constant or intermittent
- ☐ Areas/units affected
- ☐ Whether there is currently power
- ☐ Whether circuit breakers have tripped
- ☐ Whether smoke, odor, heat, water, or sparking is present
- ☐ Whether emergency services responded
- ☐ Whether the utility has been contacted
- ☐ What occurred immediately before the problem
- ☐ Clear photos taken from a safe location, if possible