FREE HOMEOWNER GUIDE

# How do I know if my electrical panel is outdated?

## Common signs your panel may be outdated

Your electrical panel is the heart of your home's electrical system. It distributes power to lights, outlets, appliances, HVAC equipment, and more. Many homes in Beaverton and Portland still have panels installed decades ago, long before modern homes demanded as much electricity as they do today.

- [ ] Breakers trip frequently
- [ ] Lights flicker or dim
- [ ] Your panel is full
- [ ] You still have a fuse box
- [ ] The panel looks rusty or damaged
- [ ] The panel smells hot or feels warm

## Why older homes often have outdated panels

Many homes were built when electrical demand was much lower. Today's homes include EV chargers, modern kitchen appliances, home offices, smart devices, and HVAC systems. An older panel that once worked fine may now be under constant strain.

## Frequently asked questions

### What are the warning signs of an outdated electrical panel?

Common signs include breakers that trip frequently, lights that flicker or dim, a panel that is full, a fuse box still in use, a panel that looks rusty or damaged, and a panel that smells hot or feels warm.

### Why do older homes often have outdated panels?

Many homes were built when electrical demand was much lower. Today's homes add EV chargers, modern kitchen appliances, home offices, smart devices, and HVAC systems, so an older panel that once worked fine may now be under constant strain.

### What does the electrical panel actually do?

The panel is the heart of your home's electrical system. It distributes power to your lights, outlets, appliances, HVAC equipment, and more, and protects each circuit with a breaker.

## Sources


1. Electrical Safety (safety tip sheet), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/project/storefront/catalog/files/safety-tip-sheets/electricalsafetytips.pdf
2. Home Electrical Fires, Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI). https://www.esfi.org/home-electrical-fires/
3. Residential Electrical Permits, City of Portland Permitting & Development. https://www.portland.gov/ppd/residential-permitting/residential-electrical-permits


> **Need a licensed electrician in the Portland area?**
> Call Smiley Electric at (503) 484-7556 (Mon–Sat, 7am–5pm) or visit smileyelectric.net/contact. For sparks, smoke, a burning smell or a hot panel, turn off the power if it is safe and call right away.


Reviewed by Joshua Smiley, owner & master electrician, Smiley Electric. Last reviewed November 13, 2026. Online version: smileyelectric.net/help/how-do-i-know-if-my-electrical-panel-is-outdated/. General information, not a substitute for an on-site inspection.


Cite this page: Smiley Electric. “How do I know if my electrical panel is outdated?” smileyelectric.net/help/how-do-i-know-if-my-electrical-panel-is-outdated/. Last reviewed November 13, 2026. You are welcome to quote, print or share this page with credit to Smiley Electric and a link to smileyelectric.net/help/how-do-i-know-if-my-electrical-panel-is-outdated/.