

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI)

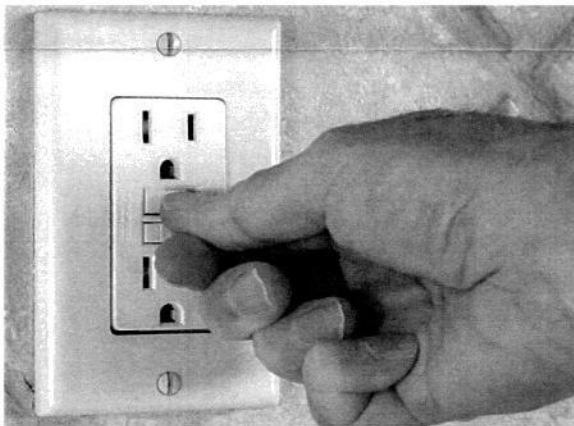
It is a circuit breaker that shuts off electric power in as little as 1/40 of a second. GFCI outlets are installed in any potentially wet or damp areas such as kitchens, bathrooms, laundry rooms, outdoors, basements, garages, workshops and areas where a water source is present.

Why Do We Need GFCIs?

Various ground-fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs, are installed in your home to save lives – yours, your family's and guest's. They prevent bodily harm when electricity diverts through you.

What Can Go Wrong With a GFCI?

Lots. We have found that a large number of homes being professionally inspected exhibit GFCI problems. It seems to be as much of a problem with brand new homes as it is with as much older homes. Often the problem is that the GFCI was improperly installed when the home was built. A GFCI breaker or outlet typically lasts for 10 years, depending on the use. You should check it once a month (or at least quarterly) and search for bad GFCI symptoms and replace them every decade. Overloading is highly problematic, for you may experience an early failure and overheating that can melt the plastic.



Testing Your GFCI Outlets

To start, try manually testing. If the GFCI won't reset or the button doesn't pop out when you press the "test" button, there may be no power to the GFCI or you may have a bad GFCI. A GFCI outlet may not reset because there's a ground fault occurring at a regular outlet that's not working, or somewhere else downstream of the GFCI. Also, if no power is reaching the GFCI, it may not reset. The component will not function properly if power does not reach its electrical box and it may not function properly if there is a small amount of dust or moisture inside the device. Buy a Circuit Tester at the hardware store. Check to be sure the other outlets in the room are working. You can use a hair dryer (plugged into a different outlet) to carefully clean out dust and dry the possibly damp circuit. If all this fails, please hire an electrician.