ELECTRICIAN PROS — GUIDE

Home electrical safety: what to notice and report

Use ESFI guidance to record concerns and prepare for an electrician visit.

Updated November 10, 2026

Use a safety check to notice concerns, not to open electrical equipment. ESFI's Home Electrical Safety Challenge states that its worksheets do not replace an inspection by a licensed, qualified electrician. We fetched the checklist on 2026-11-10.

Look without dismantling

From normal use and visible surfaces, note damaged cords, broken cover plates, heat marks and outlets that feel unusually hot during use. ESFI's checklist asks about cord condition, cover plates, hot plates and extension cords used as permanent power. Give the electrician a written list of what you noticed.

Do not remove a panel cover or touch exposed wiring to obtain a photograph. Use labels and visible equipment details if safe to do so. If there is smoke, fire or immediate danger, move away and contact emergency services.

Check how equipment is used

ESFI asks whether appliances are near a sink, cords are close to hot surfaces and liquids are near electrical products. It also asks about ventilation around electronics and use of surge protection. Check the relevant equipment instructions. Rearranging a cord does not repair damage to it.

Make a note where you rely on extension cords because permanent outlets are missing. Ask the electrician to assess a permanent solution. Tell them what equipment you intend to run there.

Test protection as instructed

The ESFI worksheet asks whether GFCIs and AFCIs have been tested that month. Follow the device instructions. Ask a qualified electrician for help if a device fails its test or will not reset. Do not bypass it to restore power.

Record repeated trips with the equipment in use and the time of the event. This is useful information for diagnosis. It is not proof that the breaker itself needs replacement.

When to request a broader review

ESFI recommends an electrical system inspection for an older home, a previously owned home purchase, a major renovation or added major appliances. The checklist gives age and time thresholds, but this guide does not use them to rule out an inspection in other circumstances.

Explain the home's history and changes to the electrician.

Ask the contractor to give each finding a description, recommended action and clear scope. For proposed work, check licence and permit details before authorising it. Keep the findings, completed work and inspection records together.

Sources

All sources below were fetched and checked on 2026-11-10. This is the check date, not a claim that each page was published that day.

- Electrical Safety Foundation, Home Electrical Safety Challenge. Checked 2026-11-10.
- California CSLB, Hire a Licensed Contractor. Checked 2026-11-10.

Frequently asked questions

Does a home checklist replace an inspection?

No. ESFI explicitly says its challenge is not a substitute for an inspection by a licensed, qualified electrician.

How often does ESFI suggest testing protection devices?

Its Home Electrical Safety Challenge asks about monthly GFCI and AFCI tests. Follow the device instructions.