ELECTRICIAN PROS — GUIDE

Panel upgrade costs: compare the whole scope

Use a dated cost range, then compare written quotes for the same electrical service work.

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Ask whether the quote replaces the panel or increases the electrical service. The descriptions can sound similar. They can involve different work at the meter, service conductors and utility connection. Have the contractor list what it includes.

A dated reference range

This Old House's cost article gives USD 800 to USD 4,000 for a panel upgrade. It gives USD 1,300 to USD 3,000 for a standard 200-amp upgrade. We fetched the article on 2026-11-10. These are US editorial reference figures, not Electrician Pros prices or Canadian quotes. Do not convert them into a local fixed price.

The same article says panel size, installation complexity, labour and added electrical work affect the bill. Ask the electrician to explain the load calculation before agreeing to a service size. Buying a larger panel does not by itself describe the capacity of the full service.

Ask for a complete scope

Request a written quote with the panel model, proposed service rating, circuits affected, grounding and bonding work, permit responsibility, utility coordination and inspection arrangements. Ask whether wall repairs, trenching and cleanup are included. Mark excluded work clearly.

Ask what happens if the utility requires work beyond the original scope. Have the contractor explain how changes are priced and approved. Keep a copy of each revised quote.

Compare bids on equal terms

Use a sheet with a column for each contractor. Put the same scope items in each column. Mark each item included, excluded or unclear. Ask for clarification before using the totals to choose a bid.

DOE's home charging guide says some homes lack capacity for charging equipment and directs owners to an electrician. If an EV charger is the reason for the upgrade, ask whether the proposed charging level or a managed charging option changes the required scope. Do not choose the service rating from a web calculator.

Plan the handover

Ask how the outage will affect refrigeration, medical equipment, business operations and access to the property. Get a named contact for utility scheduling. For a Washington job, L&I says the hired contractor buys the permit. For an Ontario job, ESA describes notification, inspection and a Certificate of Acceptance. Both pages were checked 2026-11-10. Use the requirements for your address, not a nearby jurisdiction.

Keep the final invoice, equipment details, inspection record and circuit schedule together. Resolve missing closeout documents with the contractor and permit office.

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.

- This Old House, What Is the Cost To Upgrade an Electrical Panel?. Checked 2026-11-10.
- US Department of Energy AFDC, Charging Electric Vehicles at Home. Checked 2026-11-10.
- Washington L&I, Electrical Permits, Fees & Inspections. Checked 2026-11-10.
- Ontario ESA, Notifications and Inspections. Checked 2026-11-10.

Frequently asked questions

What does a panel upgrade cost?

This Old House gives a US reference range of USD 800 to USD 4,000, checked 2026-11-10. Your written quote controls.

Does an empty breaker slot prove I have enough capacity?

No. Ask for a load assessment and an explanation of the proposed work.