

I need more breaker space

When we do electrical renovations around the house, one of the most important things to make sure of, is whether there is enough space left in your electrical panel for more breakers. Some manufactures make a "space saver" breaker which allows you to utilize a single breaker space for 2 circuits. This means is that if you have a 24 circuit panel, you can now accommodate up to a possible 48 circuits. Not all panel manufactures make space saver breakers.

If there are no space saver breakers available for your electrical panel, you have 2 options. One is to replace the existing panel with a larger capacity one or put in a sub panel. A sub panel is a smaller panel installed usually beside the existing, giving you the capability to install more circuits. Here is where you may need guidance to make the correct decision. If you are adding a hot tub and air conditioner for instance, you will need a sub panel with a large capacity, that means the breaker and wiring feeding the sub panel must be larger. If your adding a few outlets and lights in your basement, you can get away with a sub panel with less capabilities. If your going to be doing this work your self, let me give you a little advice. Always consult an electrical contractor you know and trust. You don't want to undersize the sub panel and have to re do it with larger breaker and wiring later. And of course take out your home owner electrical permit, this is real important. Oh Ya, before you put your fingers into the live electrical panel to make the connections, turn off the main breaker.



Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters

Wikipedia defines this as: "*A device that shuts off an electric power circuit when it detects that current is flowing along an unintended path, such as through water or a person. It is used to reduce the risk of electric shock, which can cause the heart to stop or cause burns.*"

In the Canadian Electrical code book, it stated that one area that GFCI protection is required, is for the 120 volt receptacle beside your bathroom sink. Now in the 70's, they were installing low voltage razor plugs in these locations. These are normally a 4" x 4" chrome plate with a small plug in the centre for charging your electric shavers. Today most people are buying a razor converter that allows you to remove the old razor plugs and install a 120 volt GFCI in it's place.



Another place where GFCI are real important is for the plug-ins on the exterior of your home. Protection for these outlets can come in 2 forms, either a GFCI receptacle on the outside or a GFCI breaker at the electrical panel. You will know if you have a GFCI receptacle installed in your home because these are rectangular shaped with a test and reset button in the centre. Please make sure you occasionally test these units to make sure they are still working as intended. Push the test button with your finger nail. If the reset button pops out, it's working. To reset, push the rest button back in until it clicks.