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SAFE HARBOR NEWSLETTER

GFCI OUTLETS

Why GFCI Protection is a Must for Your Home & Safety

We hope you're doing well! This month, we wanted to dive into an often overlooked but incredibly important safety feature in homes: **GFCI Protection**.

What is GFCI?

GFCI stands for **Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter**. It's a type of electrical outlet or circuit breaker designed to protect people from electric shock, especially in areas where water and electricity are likely to come into contact, such as bathrooms, kitchens, garages, and outdoor spaces.

A GFCI outlet detects even the smallest imbalance in the electrical current (like when electricity is "leaking" through a person to the ground) and cuts off power in a fraction of a second to prevent serious injury or worse.

Why You Need GFCI Protection

Accidents can happen when water meets electricity, and a simple shock could lead to severe consequences. Here's why GFCIs are crucial:

- **Instant Protection:** If a person comes into contact with electricity and water, the GFCI shuts off the power instantly to minimize the risk of injury.

- **Code Requirement:** Building codes require GFCI outlets in several specific areas. If your home was built or renovated before they became code-required, you may want to consider upgrading your outlets.
- **Peace of Mind:** Whether you're washing dishes in the kitchen or working in the garage, GFCIs offer reassurance that you and your family are safe from electrical hazards.

Where Should GFCIs Be Installed?

GFCI outlets are most commonly found in high-risk areas such as:

- **Bathrooms:** Water and electricity don't mix, especially near sinks, showers, and tubs.
- **Kitchens:** Areas around sinks or any place where water is in use.
- **Garages & Basements:** Areas with potential for water exposure.
- **Outdoors:** Decks, patios, and areas exposed to the elements should be protected.

Tip: If your home has older outlets, it's a good idea to check whether they are GFCI-compliant. Upgrading to GFCI outlets can be a simple way to boost your safety!

Signs Your GFCI Outlet Needs Attention

While GFCIs are designed to last, they can still wear out or malfunction, especially GFCI's in exterior locations. Here are some signs to watch for:

- **No Power When Plugged In:** If the GFCI is not working and you've tried resetting it, there could be an issue with the wiring or the device itself.
- **Frequent Tripping:** If the outlet keeps tripping, even when no obvious fault is present, it could indicate a more serious wiring problem.
- **Won't trip when tested:** If the outlet does not turn off when the test button is pressed than the GFCI may no longer be providing the necessary protection.

In either case, you should replace your GFCI outlets.

How to Test Your GFCI Outlets

Testing your GFCI outlets regularly is important. Here's how:

1. **Press the "Test" Button:** This simulates a ground fault and should cause the outlet to trip.
2. **Press the "Reset" Button:** After testing, make sure to press the "Reset" button to restore power.

Make it a habit to test your GFCIs every month!

The Bottom Line: Safety First

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Electrical safety is something we often take for granted, but it's essential for the well-being of everyone in your home. GFCIs offer critical protection against electrical shocks, so make sure your home is equipped with these life-saving outlets.

Stay safe, and don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or need recommendations on upgrading your outlets.

Stay powered up and protected!

P.S. Want to ensure your home is up to date with safety codes? Schedule an electrical inspection today!