

How GFCIs Can Protect You from Electrical Shock

Imagine cleaning up in the kitchen.

The sink is full of hot soapy water and you accidentally knock a plugged-in electric appliance into the water. With a pop, the power instantly goes off. Your life was just saved by a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).

Help prevent electric shocks in your home by installing GFCIs. GFCIs can provide protection against shock from an electrified appliance, equipment in contact with water, and from a damaged or defective appliance.

GFCIs should be installed in areas near water. This includes bathrooms, kitchens, garages, basements and outside. A GFCI detects an abnormal flow of electricity and shuts off the power, preventing shock or electrocution.

Electricity is always looking for a path to ground. A ground-fault is an unintentional

electrical path from the power source and a grounded surface. Under normal conditions, current flows in a circuit, traveling from the source, through the device it operates, and back to the source.

If an electrified appliance gets damaged by water, that flow is broken. Without a GFCI, your body could become that path to ground for the electrical current.

GFCIs come in three different forms. First, there is the receptacle GFCI. This type fits into a standard outlet box and protects against ground faults for whatever is plugged into the outlet.

Next is the circuit breaker GFCI. This is a circuit breaker with a built-in GFCI installed directly in a panel box to add protection to the circuits it supplies.

Portable GFCI is the third form. This is

designed for locations where there is not a permanent GFCI installed. Some plug into the receptacle, and devices can then be plugged into the GFCI. Another type has the GFCI circuitry built into an extension cord. Both types plug into an outlet like any corded device and require no installation.

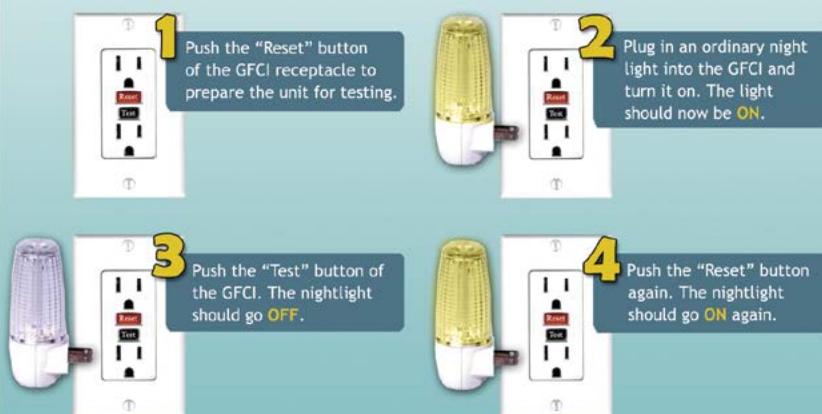
If you have receptacle or portable GFCIs, you should test them after installation, after power failures, and on a monthly basis. They will have test and reset buttons for this purpose.

If you are interested in making your home safer by installing GFCIs, contact a qualified electrician to do so. For more information on home electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org. **KCL**

How to test electrical outlets

Since the 1970s ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) have saved thousands of lives, helping cut the number of home electrocutions in half. The safety devices prevent deadly shock by quickly shutting off power to the circuit if the electricity flowing into the circuit differs from the amount returning. The safety devices should be used in any indoor or outdoor area where water may come into contact with electrical products.

GFCIs should be tested once a month to make sure they're working properly. To test a device, follow these four steps:



Source: *Electrical Safety Foundation International*