

Electrical Permits, Inspections, Disaster Recovery FAQ's

Why are you requiring us to get an electrical inspection after all that we have been through?

Inspections protect the safety and property of the general public and keep the impacts of disasters to a minimum. An electrical inspection is required if:

- Any part of your electrical system has been flooded,
- You are replacing damaged wiring or other equipment needing an inspection, or
- If your power has not been turned back on by your electrical utility because of damage to your electrical system.

I already have power to my house. Is it safe to turn everything on?

If you have any concerns, you should either get a licensed electrical contractor to look at your property and give you a recommendation or purchase an L&I electrical permit for a safety inspection to check for visually apparent problems before you turn everything on.

In flooding or earthquake situations, the damage to your electrical system may be hidden from view.

How do I start the process to get my power turned back on?

If the disaster did not damage your electrical system, call your electric utility to get your power turned back on. The utility may require an Agency Request inspection before turning your power back on. The Agency Request is a free inspection.

If the Governor officially declares a disaster and you had damage or any part of your electrical system was flooded, and the affected property is in [L&I jurisdiction](#), contact your:

- [Local L&I office](#), directly, to arrange an L&I initiated Agency Request inspection, or
- Electrical utility, building official, or other disaster agency (e.g. FEMA, Red Cross, etc.) and ask them to request an L&I Agency Request inspection by sending an [Agency Requested Inspection form](#) (F500-025-000) to the nearest [local L&I office](#).

If we find no visually apparent electrical issues during inspection, L&I will notify your electrical utility that it is OK to turn your power on.

If electrical issues are found during the Agency Request inspection, you:

- Will be given a list of what has to be repaired,
- Must get a normal electrical permit, make the repairs, and get an L&I approval inspection. As soon as the inspector determines your electrical system is safe, L&I will notify your electrical utility that it is OK to turn your power on.

Getting your power turned back on may be delayed if the utility's system is also damaged.

How do I get help fixing the damage?

You can do the electrical work yourself, hire a licensed electrical contractor, or have a friend help you so long as the friend is not compensated for the work (e.g. money, barter, etc.). You can check to see if your contractor is licensed by using our [Verify tool](#).

Learn more: <https://www.lni.wa.gov/licensing-permits/contractors/hiring-a-contractor/protect-my-home>

How do I get an electrical permit for fixing my damaged electrical system?

Property owners doing their own work can get an electrical permit at any L&I [office location](#) or online at:

<https://lni.wa.gov/licensing-permits/electrical/electrical-permits-fees-and-inspections/purchase-permits-request-inspections#property-owners-and-homeowners>

What is the cost for the electrical permit?

It is normally against the law for L&I to not charge for normal inspections.

However, there is no fee when:

- L&I initiates an Agency Request inspection during a declared disaster, or
- Another agency makes an Agency Request for inspection.

For all other declared disaster related inspections, L&I charges a portal to portal hourly fee or the rate for a normal electrical permit, whichever is least.

How fast can I get an inspection? Does disaster damaged property have any priority?

Typically, other agencies control access to declared disaster areas. Once those agencies allow L&I to enter an affected area, inspections are normally made within 24 to 48 hours of the inspection request.

Inspections in declared disaster areas are given the highest priority.

After the disaster, what determines when I have to replace any or all of my wiring?

Any electrical wiring or equipment that has apparent physical damage must be repaired or replaced. You can find detailed information on the Safety - Disaster Damage Determinations link at:

<https://www.lni.wa.gov/licensing-permits/electrical/electrical-basics-for-home-business-owners/after-floods-other-natural-disasters>

National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) guidelines provide specific guidance on flood damaged wiring and equipment. Washington electrical rules reflect that guidance:

WAC [296-46B-110](#)(2) *Electrical equipment and wiring that has been submerged or exposed to water must comply with the following:*

(a) All breakers, fuses, controllers, receptacles, lighting switches/dimmers, electric heaters, and any sealed device/equipment (e.g., relays, contractors, etc.) must be replaced.

(b) All other electrical equipment (e.g., wiring, breaker panel boards, disconnect switches, switchgear, motor control centers, boiler controls, HVAC/R equipment, electric motors, transformers, appliances, water heaters, and similar appliances) must be replaced or reconditioned by the original manufacturer, or by its approved representative.

Do I need a permit to replace damaged electrical equipment?

If you have flood damage, you may need to replace receptacles, switches, circuit breakers, and possibly wiring. Replacing only receptacles, snap switches, and individual circuit breakers does not require a permit and inspection. If you need to change any wiring or other equipment, and you are doing the work yourself, you will need a normal permit which will cover all the electrical work you do. If you hire a licensed electrical contractor, they are responsible for permits for their work. No one can perform work under another's permit.

What type of precautions should be followed for electrical hazards?

Damage to electrical equipment can sometimes be hidden.

Electrical equipment exposed to flood water can be extremely dangerous if re-energized. Moisture can get into electrical insulation or silt may be lodged inside devices or equipment causing equipment corrosion. Floodwaters may also be polluted with chemicals, sewage, oil and other contaminants which can affect the ability of equipment to function properly.

- Do not assume that any part of a flooded or potentially damaged electrical installation/appliance is safe.
- Disconnect power prior to inspecting all electrical devices and wiring.
- Do not energize any electrical devices, equipment, or wiring if it has been submerged in water. These items may work and appear safe but once they have been under water, they could cause electrocution or fire.
- Electric circuit breakers and fuses can malfunction when water and silt get inside. Discard and replace all circuit breakers and fuses that have been submerged.