

# Tool Time - Electrified

This last summer, we did the undaunting task of cleaning out our garage. What an eye-opener! We had no idea we had that many tape measures and levels! Sometimes, though, having the right tool is just what you need, not only do the job, but to be safe while doing it.

So, when it comes to our homes and electrical safety, here are a few key items to have on hand.

1. **Voltage detector** – This device detects the presence of voltage and can make sure you have shut off power to the right light switch, fan or whatever electrical device you will be working on. A non-contact tester will light up when it detects voltage. A slight word of caution in that they are not 100% reliable (but then what is – ha!) 
2. **Fire extinguisher** – Bottom line, they work great to put out that fire that might have been started by your electrical heater that tipped over on your stack of newspapers and didn't shut off, etc. You get the point – keep your fire extinguisher handy and in working order. 
3. **Electrical panel – with labels.** This device powers your home. You can turn off power to certain parts or use the main switch and disconnect all power. It is a key device if you are going to work safely when making repairs, etc. The problem – some people don't even know where their panel is located. So, how are they supposed to shut off the power? (Hint, make sure you can find your panel!) 

Once you find the panel, then it should be up to “code.” It must be set at a certain height, it must be accessible (can't be behind a bookshelf, must be located so as not to harm (can't be in a bathroom), and the breakers must be clearly labelled. And, while we are talking safety, make sure to heed these warnings from [www.squareoneinsurance.com](http://www.squareoneinsurance.com) site.

- A burning smell near your electrical panel. This is a very urgent problem, so if you find such a smell, shut off the power and call an electrician ASAP.
  - Breakers that won't stay set. A breaker that re-trips as soon as you reset it is probably experiencing a short circuit, but it could be an issue with the breaker itself. If you can't find a short circuit issue (discussed above), call an electrician to investigate.
  - Signs of burning or melting on wiring, breakers, or electrical outlets. Burning or melting are signs of overloaded circuits; if you see any signs of it, have an electrician come and take a look as soon as you can.
  - Breakers that trip often. Breakers that trip constantly may simply be overloaded, meaning you need to remove some electrical devices from that circuit. If you're fairly sure the breaker isn't overloaded but keeps tripping anyway, there may be another issue with the switch.
4. **Instructions for electrical appliances** – Although it's not a device, it is an important item, especially for those DIYers. If you are going to work on your electrical appliances, read the safety warnings found in the instruction manual and ALWAYS unplug the item BEFORE making any repairs. 