

# Don't Let Safety Mishaps Spoil Summer Fun

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The first days of summer are frequently celebrated with a barbeque, picnic, or pool party. In preparing for your festivities, you may need to run extension cords for entertainment, cooking, and tidying up around the house before your guests arrive.

All of this means the use of outdoor electrical connections, which you should always under-take with the utmost caution. The Leviton Institute offers the following safety tips to ensure your celebration isn't spoiled by an electrical mishap.

1. *Electric Grilling Tips:* When using an electric grill, avoid using it in the rain or near combustible items. To prevent the risk of electrical shock, plug your grill into a GFCI-protected outlet. Always unplug it before cleaning it and when you're not using it.
2. *Landscaping:* Inspect your electric gardening equipment for frayed cords and damaged plugs before you use it and make the necessary repairs or replacements. Be sure to keep children a safe distance away when using gardening equipment. Most of this equipment has sharp blades and fast moving parts that can throw objects such as rocks and sticks. Diggers, power shovels, mulchers, tillers, thatchers and leaf blowers can cut, burn, and even blind. Study the operating manual for all your equipment so that you know how to use each device safely.
3. *Using Indoor Appliances Outside:* When using an extension cord to plug in stereos, appliances and power tools be sure to use a three-pronged grounding plug marked for outdoor use. Never use an extension cord rated for indoor use outside. When using electrical equipment always work closest to the outlet and then move away, keeping the cord behind you to prevent it from becoming entangled.
4. *Repairs:* Some outdoor projects require the use of an aluminum extension ladder, which conducts electricity. Always apply caution when using power tools and standing on an aluminum ladder. When securing loose siding, adding a window box, plant hanger or installing a light fixture, make sure there is no electrical wiring running behind the wall you're working on before drilling or installing nails or screws. Always plug power tools into a GFCI-protected outlet.

Use a stud finder to confirm that you are not cutting into a stud. There are also voltage detectors that will indicate the presence of live electrical wires. These tools are relatively inexpensive and help you avoid a potentially hazardous accident. If a tool you're using come in contact with a live wire you could be shocked, burned or worse.

5. *Keeping Children Safe:* Keep children away from power tools, mowers, and outdoor electrical appliances. Never let them bring electrical devices near a pool or wet area. Don't allow them to fly a kite during stormy weather or near power lines. If you live near an electrical substation, make sure you teach your child not to play near the area.

6. *Pool and Spa Safety:* Hot tub, spas and pools require GFCIs. Make sure you test your GFCIs monthly using the TEST and RESET buttons on the device. Have a weather proof while-in-use cover installed over all your outdoor GFCIs. If an electrical appliance falls into the water, don't reach into the water for it. Make sure you are dry and not in contact with water or metal surfaces, then unplug the device immediately or shut off the circuit powering it before attempting to recover it.
  
7. *Picnic Safety:* Picnicking can be fun! But, be sure to keep bacteria from crashing outdoor celebrations by handling foods properly. If harmful foodborne bacteria are consumed, they can cause foodborne illness. Here are proper food handling tips for before, during and after your picnic.
  - Pre-picnic tips: Keep hands, utensils, preparation surfaces, and containers for transporting food clean. Use hand dishwashing detergent and hot water to get rid of bacteria. Rinse fruits and vegetables under running water before preparation and packing.
  - Picnic in the midst: Some picnic sites may not have a warm water source – or may not even have running water! So pack your picnic hamper with hand gel sanitizer or a disinfecting or antibacterial wipes, too, so you can clean off dirty picnic tables and benches.
  - Post-picnic how-tos: If you take along reusable serving utensils and bowls, wash them with hand dishwashing detergent and hot water as soon as you return home.

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