

What's the Risk?

Abandoned/Unused Wiring

Introduction

Open or abandoned wiring is often found in homes or buildings, where renovations or upgrades have occurred. Abandoned or unused wiring has the potential to create electrical shock hazards or fire hazards.



What's the Risk?

Abandoned or unused wires in a home or building may indicate poor or low quality electrical work by previous electrician(s) or homeowners. In the event these wires are energized they may pose a serious life safety (shock or electrocution) hazard, and live wires can also pose a serious fire hazard. Fires from energized electrical equipment can happen when short circuits or arcing occur due to environmental changes or the wires coming into contact with combustible materials.

What can be done?

The best practise is to remove all abandoned wiring to eliminate any chance of fire or shock hazard. Abandoned or unused wiring left in place for future use is allowed by some codes and must be properly terminated and tagged in accordance with the electrical code for the province. Ontario Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) bulletin 12-25-2 addresses unused wiring by stating "Unused wiring shall be properly terminated or removed. Wiring that is concealed and inaccessible shall be cut off where exposed, so as to be too short to be reused".

For other provinces, check with the Authority Having Jurisdiction regarding regulations.

Always remember that a qualified electrician should be consulted to repair or replace any defective electrical equipment.