

Aluminum wiring: Things to know, troubleshooting and tips

Buying a home that was built in the 1960s or '70s? There's a good chance it has aluminum wiring. Making a call to ESA-licensed Halton Electric for an assessment is a good first step in finding out what needs to be done to ensure the existing aluminum wire connections are safe.

At the height of its popularity in residential construction, aluminum wiring provided cost and weight advantages over the more traditional copper wires, and that is why it is still in many homes today. The reported issues of overheating and failing terminations put aluminum wiring in the spotlight, because aluminums tend to oxidize and are incompatible with devices designed for use with copper wiring.

That's why it's important that before you proceed with any new purchase or upgrade, you consult with a qualified electrician who has experience working with and repairing aluminum wiring in accordance with the Ontario Electrical Safety Code. It's an important move that could save you unnecessary hassles and expenses.

Halton Electric's experienced electricians are licensed by the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) and qualified to inspect and repair or replace aluminum wiring as necessary. The following are a few things to look for and consider.

Is my aluminum wiring safe?

You can keep the aluminum wiring in your home as long as it has been properly connected and terminated in accordance with the Electrical Safety Code and the manufacturer's instructions. Some warning signs of bad aluminum wiring:

- Faceplates are warm to the touch
- Flickering lights
- Intermittent power
- Circuits that just don't work
- Strange noises or smells coming from outlets or switches

Insuring a home with aluminum wiring

Knowing that aluminum wiring can easily overheat and possibly cause a fire, insurance companies classify aluminum wiring in a home as a greater risk than copper wiring. Having said that, however, in many cases you won't have to rewire your entire house if you get the aluminum wiring inspected by a qualified professional and then repaired or replaced as necessary.

Halton Electric's licensed electricians are able to ensure the proper connections and terminations are made and then provide a certificate to your insurance

company guaranteeing that all the necessary electrical work has been completed and your home has been brought up to modern safety standards.

Approved option: Pigtailed connection

Ontario's electrical authority has approved a few options for updating aluminum wiring, one of which is a "pigtailed connection," where a small piece of copper wire (a pigtail) is attached to a light switch or receptacle connection, and then the copper wire is joined to the existing aluminum wire. The electrician conducting this work must have an ESA permit and a great deal of care and expertise.

For more information about aluminum wiring, or for assistance with any electrical issues, contact Halton Electric at 905-335-2104 or by email haltonelec@cogeco.ca.