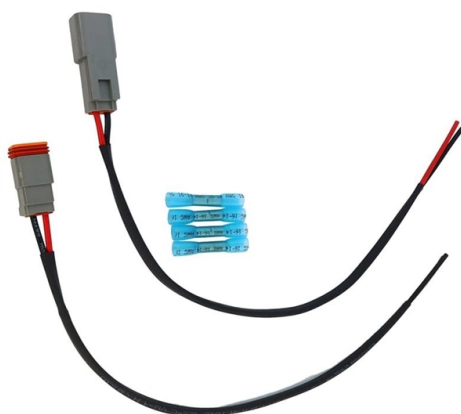


Electric distribution box next to the residence



Overview

Electrical equipment must have a minimum 30" wide clear working space laterally in front of the equipment.

Key Takeaways

Your home's electric distribution box, also known as a breaker box or electrical panel, is typically located in the basement, garage, utility room, or on an exterior wall near the electric meter. Common Locations

- Indoor: Basements, utility rooms, garages, hallways, or closets (excluding clothing closets) are typical indoor locations. Panels may also be hidden behind appliances or in pantries, but must remain accessible for safety and maintenance purposes .
- Outdoor: Panels can be mounted on exterior walls near the electric meter, often on the side or rear of the house. Outdoor panels must be weatherproof and corrosion-resistant .

Identification

Look for a rectangular metal box, usually gray or black, with a hinged door or removable cover. Sizes typically range from 14-20 inches wide and 20-40 inches tall. The main breaker is the largest switch, controlling power to the entire home, while smaller circuit breakers manage individual circuits .

Safety and Clearance Requirements

- Front clearance: Minimum 3 feet of clear space in front of the panel.

- Side clearance: At least 30 inches on both sides.
- Height: Panels should be mounted 4–6 feet above the floor, with the highest breaker no more than 6 feet 7 inches from the ground.
- Door operation: Must open at least 90 degrees.
- Prohibited locations: Bathrooms, clothing closets, pantries, or areas with flammable materials .

Maintenance and Troubleshooting

- Visual inspections: Check monthly for signs of overheating, corrosion, or loose connections.
- Circuit breaker issues: Frequent tripping may indicate overloaded circuits or faulty appliances. Flickering lights or burning odors require immediate attention.
- Professional help: If the panel is hard to locate, damaged, or non-compliant with code, contact a licensed electrician .

Additional Tips

- Label each circuit clearly for quick identification during emergencies.
- Keep the area around the panel free of clutter to ensure safe access.
- Educate all household members on the panel's location and operation for emergency preparedness . By knowing the location and proper handling of your distribution box, you can safely manage power, perform maintenance, and respond effectively to electrical issues in your home.

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