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How to dry an electrical outlet

If you're having electrical issues and your GFCI outlet won't reset, you've come to the right place. As your friendly neighborhood electrician, we've listed some common reasons why a GFCI won't reset and how homeowners like you can troubleshoot a dead outlet while still being safe and cautious. What Are GFCI Outlets? A GFCI, or a ground fault circuit interrupter, is an excellent tool that protects you and your loved ones from nasty electrical shocks. The GFCIs' purpose is to sense any leaks into the electrical current and shut down the circuit before you have an accident. However, when they stop working, it can be challenging to understand what went wrong. When the outlet's breaker trips, you must reset it to restore electrical current to the outlet. If your GFCI breaker does not reset, this could mean a more resounding problem for your outlet. 6 Reasons Your GFCI Outlet Won't Reset 1. Bad Connection/Loose Parts Sometimes if your GFCI won't reset, the problem may be as simple as some loose parts not establishing a good connection. Parts that could be loose are often: Terminal screws Stab-in connections Wires at wire connectors To figure out if this is an issue, you must remove the outlet from the box and search for loose connections. Make sure to wear rubber shoes and gloves and use rubber tools when working with anything electric. However, if you remove the outlet and see loose wires beyond repair, you may need to install a new outlet altogether. 2. No Power Supply to Receptacle If there is no power supply to the receptacle, then power can not reach your GFCI outlets. What does this mean? Even if you hit the reset button on your outlet, it still will not work. In these cases, you may have reversed line and load. In rare cases, the circuit interrupter may be defective. A good way to tell if this is the problem is by seeing that the reset button has popped out, but other plugged-in devices still work. To fix this, turn the main breaker on and off again. If that doesn't work, you may want to call an electrician to troubleshoot the problem. 3. GFCI Outlet Has Gone Bad Everything has a lifespan, including GFCI outlets. Usually, GFCI outlets last between ten and fifteen years. If you find no other tripped GFCIs and the outlet is past ten years old, you may need to replace that one GFCI outlet altogether. When this happens, purchase a new outlet and have it professionally installed. 4. Power Turned off by Circuit Breaker If you test and reset your GFCI outlet, but it still won't stay reset, a good idea is to check the breaker box to make sure the circuit breaker hasn't tripped. Try resetting the outlet. Once you reset the outlet and it still doesn't reset, moisture buildup in the wiring or outlet may be the culprit. Dry the outlet out with a hairdryer. When it has dried, you can try resetting the button. 5. GFCI Outlet Incorrectly Installed A likely reason for your outlet not resetting is because the entire outlet was incorrectly wired. During the 1980s, GFCI-receptacles were far more expensive than they are today, and as a result, builders would only place one GFCI-receptacle in the home to protect all of the downstream receptacles. As a result, many receptacles have inefficient, improper wiring. If you live in an old home, your GFCI may have been installed incorrectly. Luckily, it's easy enough to reinstall the correct one. Turn off power to your circuit breaker or fuse. Verify the power is off using a voltage tester. (It's important to always wear rubber shoes and use tools with rubber handles when working with anything electrical). Remove existing outlet. Disconnect wires from the existing outlet. Remove insulation so that 3/4-inch of the copper conductor is showing. Identify line wires and connect new wires. Place the GFCI into the wall box. Cover with the wall plate. 6. Ground Fault Wiring Issue Sometimes ground faults are the reason why your outlet won't reset. If the GFCI trips every time you reset it, there could be a ground fault along the branch circuit. In these cases, you can call a qualified electrician for troubleshooting and repairs. They can also check out your electrical panel, breaker, and electrical code to ensure no additional issues. It's a common problem to have GFCI outlets break. However, as an integral piece to the safety of your home, you must fix the problem right away when you notice a malfunctioning GFCI outlet. Contact Electric City For A FREE Electrical Inspection! To save time and money, you can try to troubleshoot the problem on your own. However, some jobs are so complex that it's worth calling a professional. If you feel like the problem is out of your hands, reach out to the professional team at Electric City. Short circuits are a major type of electrical accident that can cause serious damage to your electrical system. They occur when a low-resistance path not suited to carry electricity receives a high-volume electrical current. In simpler terms, short circuits happen when hot wire touches a conductive object it's not supposed to. The result of a short circuit can be appliance damage, electrical shock, or even a fire. And if you're not taking any preventative measures against short circuits, you're only increasing the risk of these situations happening. Roman Electric advises every Milwaukee homeowner to practice ways to prevent short circuits, and we have listed 5 of these steps below. 1. Check Outlets Before Use Behind every outlet is a box with attached wires. And some of the major causes of a short circuit are faulty wiring, loose box connections, and an aging outlet. Although diagnosing these issues can be difficult, considering they're hidden behind your walls, you can still help prevent short circuits by examining your outlets before each use. There are certain signs that indicate your outlet may be at risk of a short circuit: Outlet has burn marks or burning smell. Buzzing or popping sound coming from outlet. Sparks emitting from outlet. Outlet is over 15-25 years old. If any of these signs apply, refrain from using the outlet and contact Roman Electric immediately. 2. Check Appliances Before Use Just like outlets, you'll want to check your appliances before plugging them in as well. Short circuits can also be caused by faulty wiring or circuitry from the appliance itself. Before every use, check appliances for these signs: Damaged cords, casing, or wire. Several cracks in the appliance. Appliance has exposed circuitry. If any of these signs apply, we recommend either disposing of or having a professional repair your appliance. 3. Reduce Electrical Usage During Storms One of the most dangerous ways a short circuit can happen is by a lightning strike, as the overwhelming amount of electricity can lead to some serious damage. We recommend reducing your electrical usage during a lighting storm to only the necessities. Not only will this help prevent short circuits from happening during a storm – this also helps lessen the damage if a power surge occurs. 4. Perform Basic Circuit Breaker Maintenance Your electrical system does have protection against short circuits – which are its circuit breakers. These components located in your electrical panel shut off when electrical currents are deemed unstable, with each of them being tied to a different circuit. We recommend you practice some basic circuit breaker maintenance to help ensure their function. We have provided a few tips below: Check each circuit breaker for any damages, cracks, or loose fittings. Know what circuit each breaker controls. We recommend using a circuit breaker finder. More info can be found here. Clean any dirt stains or spots located on the breaker and panel (only use a dry cloth for this). If you would like to better maintain your circuit breakers using professional services, contact Roman Electric for our circuit breaker services. 5. Schedule an Electrical Inspection at Least Once a Year Much like a doctor's appointment, electrical inspections should be done at least once a year. This allows an electrical professional such as Roman Electric to fully examine your electrical system. From there, we can pinpoint and prevent short circuits from occurring, as well as provide cost-effective solutions to resolve any other issue we find. Electrical inspections help better maintain your wiring, outlets, and every other part of your electrical system. Schedule one today! Do what's best for your electrical system by practicing these ways to prevent short circuits. And contact Roman Electric for our circuit breaker and electrical inspection services. Give us a call at 414-771-5400 to speak with Milwaukee's leading electrical experts. Skip to main content Home Outdoors Yard & Garden Structures Ponds Time Complexity Cost Run an underground electrical line into the garden to power an outdoor light. Here's the quickest and cheapest method for bringing power to a remote spot without tearing up your yard. Say you need a bright yard light way out in your yard or a remote outlet to power a pond pump or electric tools. By far the best way to get electrical power right where you need it is to run underground 'line' voltage (120-volt household current). All it takes is a little electrical moxie and a willingness to dig a shallow trench. In this article, we show the easiest, quickest and cheapest method to safely run electricity outdoors. Our method involves directly burying UF (underground feeder) plastic shielded cable 12 inches below ground level. We'll also show you a no-sweat way to run the line under a walkway and how to hook up the wiring at both ends. For this project, you should have the fundamental wiring skills it takes to make proper connections and the basic electrical and carpentry tools. While they're not crucial, a trench shovel, a mattock and a sledgehammer will make the trench work easier and faster. Allow about a day to complete this project, assuming you collect all the parts in advance. In our project, we run a line from an existing outdoor outlet on the house to a light and receptacle at the edge of a garden path. It incorporates a combination light switch/outlet. The outlet is always hot, and the switch controls only the light. If you don't have an outdoor box to tap in to, consider installing one on your house. You can expand the project to include additional outlets, switches and lights. The techniques for running the wire and mounting electrical boxes are the same. However, make sure not to overload the circuit. While we enclosed the electrical boxes inside a hollow post, you can simply mount a weatherproof box on the side of a 4×4, as long as you protect the cable by running it in conduit from the trench bottom to the box. Determine where you want the electrical post positioned and then find the nearest existing outlet to supply the power. Note: That outlet must be GFCI protected. Mark the Route and Dig Mark the cable route from the power source (house outlet) to the position of the remote outlet with spray paint. Call the utility companies to mark any underground lines. Get an electrical permit, either from your local building inspections department or a state office. Dig a 12-inch deep trench connecting the two points and the 2-foot deep posthole for the light. Pile the dirt on a strip of plastic next to the trench. Pro tip: Give trees a wide berth to avoid chopping through roots. Approach sidewalks or paths at right angles for easier tunneling and make sure to plan a 3-foot long straight section of trench on one side of the walkway. That's so you'll have room for driving the conduit beneath it. After the trench is finished, dig a posthole at the end of the trench about 2 feet deeper than the trench to receive the light pole post. To make sure the "feeder" outlet you choose is GFCI protected, look for the characteristic GFCI buttons, or if it's a standard outlet, check it with a GFCI tester. Standard outlets still may be GFCI protected by being linked to another GFCI outlet elsewhere in the house. If yours isn't protected, simply replace the standard outlet with a new GFCI outlet using the techniques we show in Photo 13 and Figure A. Another option is to cut in, mount and wire a new outside GFCI outlet, feeding it from an outlet mounted on an inside wall in the house. Sometimes that's easier than digging a long trench to a more distant power source. You also have to make sure the new outlet/light won't overload the circuit you tie into, and that the box is big enough to handle the additional wire. To determine whether the circuit you want to use can handle the additional electrical demand, first shut off the circuit in the main panel. Then go through the house turning on lights and other electrical items. Add up the wattage of everything that stays off (the items on the circuit). Then add on the wattage of the post light plus the wattage of items continuously powered by the outlet. We recommend a maximum connected load of 1,440 watts for a 15-amp circuit and 1,920 watts for a 20-amp circuit (the amperage is stamped on the breaker or fuse). If the total wattage exceeds these amounts, find a different circuit. If you're not sure, call in a licensed electrician to help with this part. Complete DIY projects like a pro! Sign up for our newsletter! Do It Right, Do It Yourself! Run Conduit Under the Sidewalk Drive 1/2-inch rigid metal conduit under the walkway with a sledgehammer. Pro tip: Never use "thin wall" conduit, which corrodes quickly, or plastic conduit, which is too weak. Protect the ends with fittings (lower photo) and lay wood blocks in the trench to keep the conduit clear of the trench bottom. Push the Wire Through Replace the conduit fittings with plastic bushings. Lay the UF cable in the bottom of the trench and push the cable through the conduit. Note: Wire rated for underground use carries a stamp on the jacket (lower photo). Cut it to length, leaving 3 feet of extra cable at the post hole and at the outlet. Assemble the Parts Turn off the circuit breaker to the house outlet. Test it to make sure it's dead and disconnect it. Cut to length and dry-fit the PVC parts, then glue up the assembly. Bring the Cable to the Power Source Feed the cable through the conduit and screw the exterior extension box to the existing box. Fasten the conduit to the siding with a strap and file two 1/8-inch deep weep holes at the bottom of the box. Partially Preassemble Your Light Post Partially preassemble the light post before it's wired so you can stick it in the ground and have full access to the interior for stapling wires and making the hookups. Pro tip: But make sure that the light fixtures you choose are rated for "wet location." You'll find that designation on the fixture box. Test-fit the fixture on the post before cutting the hole for the round electrical box to make sure it clears all of the trim. Notch the Post Cut a 4-inch tall x 1/2-inch deep notch in the 4x4 x 60-inch post. Nail two sides and a 1-1/2 x 2-inch nailer to the post as shown. With a jigsaw, cut the hole for the round electrical box in the second 1x8 and nail it to the post assembly. Cut Holes for the Electrical Boxes Trace and cut the hole for the outlet box in the second 1x6. Tack the 1x6 to the sides, then slip the box through the hole and screw it to the notch. Shim out the box if needed, and then remove the 1x6. Set the Post Set the post assembly in the hole and adjust the height Fill and pack soil around the post bottom. Assemble and glue the plastic conduit parts. Run the cable through it and strap it to the post. Fasten the Light Box Install the light box and run a cable from it to the outlet box. Insert both cables and fasten them to the outlet box with cable clamps. Add the Light Fixture Finish the wood trim on the post. Hook up the light fixture following the manufacturer's directions. Wire the Switch Connect the switch/outlet with 6-inch 'pigtails' for the neutral and ground. Install the Weatherproof Cover Mount the gaskets and screw special weatherproof covers over the switch/outlet for this project. Connect to the GFCI Outlet Connect the hot and neutral wires leading to the post to the "load" terminals on the GFCI. Connect the house wiring to the "line" terminals. Finish Up Add a weatherproof cover to the house outlet. Fill the trench after the electrical inspection. GFCI outlets have two sets of terminals, "line" and" load". Line is for the incoming wires from the power source, and load is for the switches, outlets and fixtures that it supplies. Don't wire it improperly or users won't be protected against shocks caused by damp ground or standing water. Cut and dry-fit all of the PVC parts. Before taking them apart for gluing, draw alignment marks on each joint. That way you'll get them back together in the proper orientation. Apply "duct seal" putty to the bottom side of the top hub plugs in the extension box at the house. That will keep water from entering the box. The male adapters and plastic bushings on the ends of pipes are to protect the cable from the sharp pipe edges. They're not only required but also a good idea, so don't skip that step! Originally Published: December 31, 2020

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