

Be in-the-know and hire a pro

This year, Canadians who are planning a home renovation may consider paying a friend or neighbour to do their handy work for them.

Though we all like to look for a bargain, it's important to know that the person we're paying to work on our home knows what he or she is doing. After all, there are a number of safety measures that need to be considered when doing things like electrical work, and an amateur or novice craftsman may not be in the know.

The **Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)** says the source of many electrical fires, incidents and accidents can often be attributed to unqualified individuals doing the work.

ESA inspectors have identified the following three errors as the most common among unlicensed contractors:

1. Use of incorrect wire or incorrectly rated wire -

Using the wrong wire rating could mean pumping more amps through a wire than it can handle. When the wire overheats, the possibility of a fire brewing increases dramatically. Also, retrofitting old wiring

can be equally as hazardous, especially if a home's original wiring was aluminum and the new wiring is copper.

2. Improper grounding or bonding of outlets -

If you're old enough to remember when electrical outlets had only two prongs, you're probably wondering what the third is for. The third prong leads to a grounding system that sends excess electricity to the ground where it can be safely disbursed.

3. Pot lights mix-up -

Pot lights are a popular fixture these days and are more complicated to install than they look. Some are specially designed with domes for insulated ceilings, while others are not. Using the wrong pot lights presents a fire risk.

To avoid these dangers, the **ESA** recommends hiring a licensed electrical contractor to perform electrical work, or at the very least calling an **ESA** inspector to look over your work.

Ontarians looking for a licensed contractor can go to www.pluginsafely.com to find one in their area. (NC)