

# How to shut off electricity in an emergency

There are two basic types of residential electrical panels: **circuit-breaker box** and **fuse box**. If it has rows of switches, it's a circuit-breaker box (see photo 1)—that's what you'll find in most modern houses or older houses in which electricity has been upgraded to modern standards. If it has knobs and fuses (see photo 2), it's a fuse box. Fuse boxes are typically found only in older houses that have not had electrical upgrades. (If your house has an old fuse box, you should seriously consider upgrading to safer, more efficient circuit-breakers.)

Sometimes you may see the term "fuse box" used generically to refer to *both* old-style fuse boxes and modern circuit-breaker boxes—but be aware that the two are completely different in appearance and operation.

Locate your electrical panel—it's usually near the electric meter (see photo 3)—and familiarize yourself with it *before* an emergency occurs.

Label at least the main circuit-breakers ahead of time. (It's also a good idea to label all your circuits in case you have to deal with a tripped individual breaker at some point.)

## Here's how to shut off all electricity to your home:

**Circuit-breaker box:** Flip the main circuit-breaker switch (usually a pair of switches joined together) to OFF. The main switch may be at the top of the panel (as in photo 3) or the bottom of the panel (as in photo 1), but sometimes it is located in the middle of the panel as part of the array of breaker switches. The switch may or may not be marked "Main."

**Older fuse box:** Pull the main disconnect or use the movable handle (see photo 2) to pull out the fuse block, which will shut off power to the house. Sometimes there are two or more fuse blocks, in which case you'll need to pull them *all* out. It may take a strong tug or two to remove them.

If you have an automatic garage door and/or automatic gate(s), learn how to open them manually before an emergency occurs. Other possible impacts when you're without power: You'll have no internet or wi-fi, and

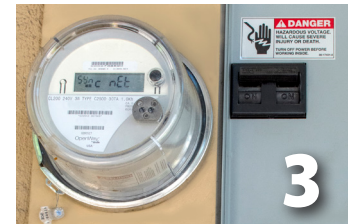


Photo by TRO (Clicker)

electrical appliances, including your refrigerator, won't function (keep the refrigerator door closed to keep contents cold as long as possible).

Southern California Edison has an "Electricity Safety at Home" page on their website ([sce.com/safety/family/indoor-tips](http://sce.com/safety/family/indoor-tips)) with information about circuit breakers and fuse boxes, as well as other helpful tips about using electricity safely at home.

**Note:** The LHH Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Committee is now seeking members. If you are interested in becoming part of the committee or if you have questions, please contact Chairperson John Pespisa at **562-694-1371**.