

Wiring causes concern

Check the water pressure and observe how fast the water drains. With one clogged drain, the location of the clog can be pinpointed. If only one fixture doesn't drain, the problem is near that fixture. If two or more fixtures won't drain, something is blocking a main drain.

A. — The safety of aluminum wiring depends on whether corrective measures were taken by the previous owner. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission says that houses with aluminum wiring are a potential fire hazard. During the period between 1965 and 1973, because of the shortage of copper and its high cost, aluminum was used to wire about 1.5 million houses. Although aluminum wiring was approved by the National Electrical Code, it was later found that there was dangerous overheating in 15- and 20-amp branch circuits at some of the connections between the aluminum wires and outlet receptacles, switches, fixtures and appliances. Anyone who has aluminum wiring should be alert for the following: (1) aluminum plates on outlets or switches that feel warm to the touch; (2) sparks, arcing or smoke at outlets or switches; (3) odor, especially the smell of burning plastic around outlets and switches; outlets, lights or entire circuits that don't work.

The corrections described should be made by a licensed electrician who has this equipment. Connecting the copper pigtail to the aluminum wire using a wire nut is not an approved method. You can check your outlets and switches to see if the wire terminations were pigtailed prior to your purchasing the house.

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