

Federal Pacific Electric Panels

Fact: There are millions of Federal Pacific circuit breaker panels currently being used in the U.S. Thousands of these electrical panels lead to electrical fires each year.



Federal Pacific Electric (FPE) panels do not meet today's current safety code standards. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) found that the material used to make the breakers is sub-standard, which may prevent a breaker from effectively working. Thus, FPE breakers present a high risk for an electrical fire. Due to lack of funding the CPSC was unsuccessful in continuing their investigation to obtain enough information to recall the FPE panel, which allowed the defective panels to be placed in millions of homes and businesses. The solution to preventing an electrical fire is to replace FPE panels. Do you want to gamble with inadequate fire protection?

How is an electrical panel supposed to work?

- An electrical panel includes bus bars, which conduct a major current of electricity from incoming feeders.
- Circuit breakers connect to bus bars and safely distribute electricity throughout the facility.
- Each circuit breaker protects the electric current flowing to a specific appliance or outlet.
- The circuit breaker will trip (shut off) the flow of electricity if it senses that the current is overloaded or short-circuited.
- When a circuit breaker trips, it prevents the wiring from overheating and starting an electrical fire.

Why are Federal Pacific Electric panels so dangerous?

- FPE panels are known to be overcrowded with wires.
- Bus bars for several of the panels are spring mounted which can cause unstable connections.
- Circuit breakers within FPE panels could be turned on when in the down position. The design of some FPE panels makes it difficult to determine if breakers are off or on.
- Circuit breakers will often trip when removing dead front covers.
- In many instances, split-bus breakers do not comply with today's safety regulations.

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- Connections between the bus bars and the circuit breakers may be loose due to fragile components that are easily damaged during installation. This can lead to arcing (spark), which could cause a fire.
- Circuit breakers are known to split easily when positioned into a FPE panel circuit breaker socket.
- Panels are frequently overcrowded from circuit breakers being jammed into their sockets.
- Circuit breakers are often compromised by a bus bar attempting to trip the circuit breaker but failing to disrupt the current. They are then reset, which causes a serious problem because the compromised circuit breaker will not trip when overloaded the next time.

Why do you need to worry?

It's been proven that FPE circuit breakers don't always trip when the current is overloaded or when there's a short-circuit present. This causes wires to overheat and can cause an electrical fire, thus, defeating the intended purpose of a circuit breaker. Unfortunately, unless a circuit breaker is overloaded or a short-circuit occurs, these panels could work effectively, allowing one to believe there's nothing wrong with their panel.



How to identify if you have FPE panels

- FPE panels were one of the most-used panels from the 1950s to the 1980s.
- Look for the Federal Pacific Electric name across the front of the panel or on the inside of the front cover.
- Look for the Stab-Lok logo on the electrical panel.
- Look for Stab-Lok circuit breakers inside. FPE Stab-Lok circuit breakers have a red strip across the circuit breaker.
- Other FPE panel circuit breaker colors could be completely black or a combination of black and orange.



Additional facts

- Homes require a lot more electricity than they used to; FPE panels aren't designed to maintain those higher levels of electricity.
- There have been several defects in the design and manufacturing of the panels.
- Replacing numerous circuit breakers within a FPE panel could cost more than replacing the entire unit.
- FPE was found cheating on UL testing to gain Underwriters Laboratories approval.