TORONTO ELECTRICAL REPAIR

Permits & ESA

ESA permits, electrical inspections, Ontario Electrical Safety Code requirements, and City of Toronto building permits

13 Expert Answers from Electric IQ

torontoelectricalrepair.com/construction-brain

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Q1

Does the ESA require a separate permit for low-voltage wiring like ethernet or security cameras?

No, the ESA does not require permits for low-voltage wiring like ethernet cables, security cameras, or other telecommunications/data cabling in residential applications. These systems operate at safe voltages (typically 12-48V DC) and fall outside ESA jurisdiction under the Ontario Electrical Safety Code.

What's Considered Low-Voltage (No ESA Permit Required): Low-voltage systems include ethernet/Cat6 data cables, security camera wiring, doorbell systems, intercom wiring, audio/video cables, and most smart home device connections. These systems typically operate at 12V, 24V, or 48V DC and are powered by plug-in transformers or Power over Ethernet (PoE) switches that connect to standard household outlets.

The key distinction is that these systems don't involve direct connection to your home's 120V/240V electrical system. A security camera system, for example, might have a dozen cameras connected by low-voltage cables to a central recorder, but only the recorder itself plugs into a standard household outlet — and that outlet connection doesn't require a permit if it's an existing outlet.

When ESA Permits ARE Required: You'll need an ESA permit if the low-voltage installation requires new 120V electrical circuits. Installing security cameras often means adding outdoor outlets for floodlights or indoor outlets for equipment racks — those new outlet circuits require permits. Similarly, a whole-home ethernet installation might need a new 20A circuit in the basement for network equipment, and that circuit addition requires an ESA permit.

GTA Installation Considerations: Many GTA homes, especially pre-1990s properties in Toronto's established neighborhoods, lack adequate low-voltage wiring infrastructure. Running ethernet cables in century homes with plaster walls or 1960s bungalows with limited basement access can be challenging. Professional low-voltage installers often coordinate with electricians when new power circuits are needed to support the system.

Practical Installation Tips: For DIY ethernet installation, use Cat6 cable rated for the installation location — CMP (plenum) rated for HVAC spaces, CMR (riser) rated for vertical runs between floors, or CM (general purpose) for most residential applications. Maintain separation from electrical wiring to avoid interference — keep low-voltage cables at least 6 inches from electrical circuits, or use shielded cable when running parallel to electrical wiring.

When to Hire Professionals: While low-voltage work doesn't require ESA permits, complex installations benefit from professional expertise. Security system installers understand camera placement, cable routing, and integration with monitoring services. Network specialists can design ethernet systems that support current and future bandwidth needs, including considerations for WiFi access points, smart home hubs, and streaming devices throughout your GTA home.

Need help finding a licensed electrician for any new circuits to support your low-voltage installation? Toronto Electrical Repair can match you for free through the Toronto Construction Network.

Q2

How much does it cost to have an electrician pull an ESA permit for adding a subpanel in my garage?

The electrician doesn't charge separately for pulling the ESA permit — it's included in their project quote, but the ESA permit fee itself runs $100-$200 for a typical garage sub-panel installation.

When you hire a licensed electrician for a garage sub-panel, they handle the entire ESA permit process as part of their service. The electrician applies for the permit online or by phone before starting work, completes the installation to Ontario Electrical Safety Code standards, and coordinates the ESA inspection. This administrative work is built into their overall project pricing rather than itemized separately.

ESA permit fees are set by the province and calculated based on the scope of work. For a garage sub-panel installation (typically 60-100A), expect the permit fee to be $100-$200. This covers the permit application, plan review, and one inspection visit. If the work doesn't pass initial inspection and requires corrections, there's usually no additional permit fee for the re-inspection, though some electricians may charge extra for their time to make corrections and coordinate the second visit.

The complete garage sub-panel project typically costs $1,200-$2,500 in the GTA, which includes the sub-panel box, breakers, wire run from your main panel to the garage, installation labour, ESA permit fee, and inspection coordination. The wide price range depends on several factors: distance from your main panel to the garage (longer wire runs cost more), whether the circuit needs to be buried underground or run overhead, the amperage rating of the sub-panel (60A vs 100A), and how many circuits you want in the garage panel.

For GTA garages specifically, most homeowners install a 60A or 100A sub-panel to support outlets for tools and equipment, overhead lighting, garage door opener, and potentially an EV charger circuit. If you're planning to add an EV charger later, discuss this with your electrician during the sub-panel design — a Level 2 EV charger needs a dedicated 40-50A circuit, so you'll want adequate capacity in your garage sub-panel.

The ESA inspection is mandatory and typically happens within 3-7 business days of your electrician's request (up to 2 weeks during peak construction season). The inspector verifies that the sub-panel installation meets code requirements: proper wire sizing, correct breaker ratings, adequate grounding, proper panel mounting height, and clear labeling of all circuits. Once the work passes inspection, you'll receive a Certificate of Inspection — keep this

document permanently with your home records as proof of code-compliant electrical work.

One important consideration for **detached garages**: if your garage is separate from your house, the wire run may need to be buried underground using TECK cable, which increases material costs. The burial depth must meet code requirements (typically 18 inches minimum), and the circuit needs proper grounding at both the main panel and garage sub-panel.

Need help finding a licensed electrician for your garage sub-panel project? Toronto Electrical Repair can match you with local professionals who handle the complete process from permit application through final inspection.

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- Focus on Flooring and General Contracting

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Q3

What documentation do I need to provide for an ESA permit application for a kitchen renovation in Toronto?

For a kitchen renovation ESA permit in Toronto, your licensed electrician will handle the permit application and needs to provide a detailed electrical plan showing all new circuits, outlet locations, lighting, and appliance connections, along with a load calculation to ensure your panel can handle the additional electrical demand.

The **Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) permit application** requires specific technical documentation that demonstrates code compliance and safety. Your electrician submits this electronically through the ESA portal before any electrical work begins.

Required Documentation for Kitchen Electrical Permit:

The **electrical plan** is the core document — a scaled drawing of your kitchen showing exact locations of all new outlets, switches, lighting fixtures, and dedicated appliance circuits. This must indicate GFCI outlet locations (required within 1.5 metres of the sink and for all countertop outlets), under-cabinet lighting circuits, pendant or chandelier locations, and dedicated 20A circuits for countertop outlets. The plan shows wire routing, circuit numbers, and connection points.

A **load calculation** verifies your existing panel can handle the new electrical demand. Kitchen renovations typically add significant load — dishwasher circuit, garbage disposal, microwave, additional countertop outlets, under-cabinet lighting, and potentially a new range or cooktop circuit. If your home has a 100A panel that's already near capacity, the calculation may reveal you need a panel upgrade before the kitchen work can proceed.

Circuit schedule and specifications detail each new circuit — wire gauge (typically 12 AWG for 20A kitchen circuits, 14 AWG for 15A lighting), breaker type (standard, GFCI, or AFCI as required), and connected loads. Kitchen circuits require GFCI protection at countertop locations, and newer code editions require AFCI protection on lighting circuits.

Equipment specifications list all electrical devices — outlet types, switch ratings, fixture mounting requirements, and appliance connection methods. If you're installing a new electric range, cooktop, or built-in oven, the permit includes wire sizing for these high-amperage circuits (typically 8 AWG or 6 AWG wire on 40-50A circuits).

GTA Kitchen Renovation Considerations:

Toronto's older housing stock creates unique challenges. **Century homes** in neighbourhoods like Cabbagetown, Riverdale, and the Annex often need complete electrical upgrades during kitchen renovations — the existing 60A service and knob-and-tube wiring can't support modern kitchen loads. **Post-war bungalows** across Scarborough and North York typically have 100A panels that may need upgrading to accommodate a full kitchen renovation with electric appliances.

Condo kitchen renovations face additional restrictions — building management approval, noise bylaws limiting construction hours, and electrical capacity constraints in older buildings. Some Toronto condos have shared electrical infrastructure that limits individual unit upgrades.

Permit Process and Timing:

Your electrician applies for the permit online, paying $100-$400 depending on the scope (calculated by number of devices and circuits). The permit must be approved before any electrical work begins — starting work without a permit is illegal and creates serious problems at resale.

After electrical work is complete, your electrician schedules an **ESA inspection** — typically within 3-7 business days, though peak renovation season (spring/summer) can extend this to 2 weeks. The inspector verifies all work

matches the approved plan and meets Ontario Electrical Safety Code requirements. You receive a **Certificate of Inspection** when work passes — keep this document permanently with your home records.

What You Need to Provide:

As the homeowner, you provide the **renovation plans** showing the new kitchen layout, appliance locations, and any structural changes. Your electrician uses this to create the electrical plan. You'll also need to specify appliance requirements — electric vs. gas range, built-in vs. countertop microwave, garbage disposal, wine fridge, or other specialty appliances that need dedicated circuits.

Cost and Timeline:

Kitchen electrical permits typically cost $200-$400, and the application-to-approval process takes 1-3 business days for straightforward renovations. Complex projects requiring panel upgrades or service entrance modifications take longer and cost more.

Need help finding a licensed electrician for your kitchen renovation? Toronto Electrical Repair can match you with local professionals who handle ESA permits and inspections as part of their service.

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Q4

How long does it take to get an ESA inspection after my electrician finishes the work?

After your electrician notifies the ESA that work is complete, you can typically expect an inspection within 3 to 7 business days, though during peak season it can stretch to two weeks or more. The timeline depends on how busy the ESA's inspection schedule is in your region of the GTA, and summer months — when renovation activity spikes across Toronto — tend to have the longest wait times.

The process works like this: your licensed electrician completes the permitted work, then submits a "notification of completion" to the ESA, either online through their contractor portal or by phone. The ESA then schedules an inspector to visit your property. You or someone over 18 needs to be home during the inspection window, and the electrician should ideally be available by phone in case the inspector has questions about the installation. Most residential inspections take 30 to 60 minutes depending on the scope of work — a simple outlet circuit addition is quicker than a full panel upgrade or rewire.

If the inspector finds deficiencies, your electrician will receive a deficiency notice outlining exactly what needs to be corrected. Common deficiencies in GTA homes include improper box fill calculations, missing anti-short bushings on AC90 cable entries, inadequate bonding at the panel, or AFCI protection not installed where the Ontario Electrical Safety Code requires it. Your electrician corrects the issues and requests a re-inspection. The re-inspection typically comes faster than the initial visit — often within a few business days — because the ESA prioritizes clearing open permits. There is usually no additional fee for the first re-inspection, but repeated failures can incur charges in the $50 to $100 range.

Once the work passes inspection, the ESA issues a **Certificate of Inspection**. This document is critically important — keep it permanently with your home records. You will need it if you sell your home, if you file an insurance claim related to electrical systems, or if future electrical work is done and the electrician needs to understand what was previously permitted. Many Toronto real estate lawyers now specifically ask for ESA certificates during the closing process, and missing certificates on recent electrical work can delay or complicate a sale.

One practical tip: if your project is time-sensitive — for instance, you need the inspection to pass before drywall goes up during a renovation — have your electrician communicate this to the ESA when submitting the notification. The ESA does accommodate construction schedules when possible, and your electrician's relationship with the local inspection office can help expedite things. If you need help finding a licensed electrician who handles ESA permits and inspections as part of their service, Toronto Electrical Repair can match you with local professionals through the Toronto Construction Network.

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Q5

What happens if my electrical work fails the ESA inspection in Toronto?

If your electrical work fails an ESA inspection, the inspector will issue a deficiency notice listing exactly what needs to be corrected before the work can be approved. This is not uncommon — even experienced electricians occasionally receive minor deficiency notices — and it does not mean the work is dangerous, just that specific code requirements were not fully met during the initial inspection.

The deficiency notice is a detailed document that references specific sections of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code (OESC). Common deficiencies found in GTA residential inspections include missing or improperly installed AFCI breakers on bedroom circuits, insufficient GFCI protection near water sources, improper wire support or stapling intervals, missing connector fittings where cables enter boxes, and inadequate panel labelling. Your electrician receives the notice and is responsible for making all corrections — this is part of the service you are paying for, and a reputable electrician will not charge extra for correcting legitimate deficiencies found during the first inspection.

Once your electrician completes the corrections, they notify the ESA to schedule a re-inspection. Re-inspections are typically scheduled within 2 to 5 business days and move faster than the original inspection because the inspector is only checking the specific items on the deficiency list. The first re-inspection is generally included in your original permit fee, which ranges from $100 to $400 depending on the scope of work. However, if the work fails a second time, additional re-inspection fees of $50 to $100 may apply, and repeated failures can trigger closer scrutiny of the electrician's work on future permits.

The critical thing to understand is that you should **never cover up or conceal electrical work before it passes ESA inspection**. If you drywall over wiring that has not been inspected, the ESA inspector may require you to open walls for visual inspection — and the cost of drywall removal and repair falls on you. Experienced electricians in the

GTA coordinate their work with the inspection schedule, leaving walls open until the certificate is issued.

There is also a scenario where a homeowner discovers unpermitted electrical work done by a previous owner or an unlicensed worker. In this case, the ESA can issue a compliance order requiring the work to be brought up to code by a licensed electrician and properly inspected. The permit fee for retroactive permitting is the same $100 to $400 range, but the cost of bringing substandard work up to code can be significantly higher — sometimes thousands of dollars if wiring needs to be replaced entirely. This is one of the strongest arguments for always hiring a licensed electrician who pulls proper ESA permits from the start. Toronto Electrical Repair can help you find licensed electricians in your area through the Toronto Construction Network directory.

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- Bhogal Metal

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Q6

How much does an ESA electrical permit cost for a panel upgrade in Toronto?

An ESA permit for a residential panel upgrade in Toronto typically costs between $150 and $300, depending on the scope of work involved. The ESA calculates permit fees based on a fee schedule that considers the number of devices, circuits, and the amperage of the service — a straightforward 100A to 200A panel swap sits at the lower end, while a full service entrance upgrade with meter base replacement and multiple new circuits pushes toward the higher end.

The ESA's residential permit fee structure is based on the total number of "devices" being installed or modified. A device includes each outlet, switch, light fixture, or dedicated circuit connection. For a panel upgrade where you are simply replacing the panel box and breakers without adding new circuits, you are looking at the base permit fee in the $100 to $150 range. However, most panel upgrades in GTA homes involve more than just swapping the box — electricians typically add circuits for modern demands like EV charger pre-wiring, dedicated kitchen circuits, or

AFCI-protected bedroom circuits that the home was lacking. Each additional circuit and its devices add to the permit fee, pushing the total into the $200 to $300 range for a comprehensive panel upgrade.

Your electrician handles the entire permit process as part of their service — applying online through the ESA's contractor portal, paying the fee, scheduling the inspection, and addressing any deficiencies. The permit fee is almost always included in your electrician's quoted price for the job. If an electrician quotes you a panel upgrade and the permit fee is listed separately, that is fine, but make sure it is clearly itemized so you know exactly what you are paying. A complete 100A to 200A panel upgrade in the GTA runs $2,000 to $5,000 total, and the $150 to $300 permit fee is a small fraction of the overall project cost.

One thing worth noting for Toronto homeowners specifically: if your panel upgrade also requires Toronto Hydro to disconnect and reconnect your service — which is necessary when the meter base or service entrance cable is being replaced — there may be additional coordination fees and waiting time. Toronto Hydro typically requires 5 to 10 business days' notice for a planned disconnect, and your electrician needs to schedule the ESA inspection after the electrical work is complete but before Toronto Hydro reconnects permanent service. Experienced GTA electricians manage this coordination routinely, but it does add a few days to the overall project timeline.

The permit also covers your inspection, and the Certificate of Inspection you receive after passing is a valuable document. It confirms that your new panel meets the current Ontario Electrical Safety Code, which is important for insurance purposes — many Ontario insurers offer premium reductions for homes with upgraded, code-compliant panels. If you are planning a panel upgrade and want quotes from licensed electricians who handle ESA permits as standard practice, Toronto Electrical Repair can match you with professionals in your area for free.

Q7

Do I need a City of Toronto building permit in addition to an ESA permit for electrical work?

For most standalone residential electrical projects, you only need an ESA permit — a separate City of Toronto building permit is not required. However, if the electrical work is part of a larger renovation that involves structural changes, plumbing, or HVAC modifications, the City of Toronto Building Division will require a building permit for the overall project, and the electrical component still requires its own ESA permit on top of that.

The distinction is important because the ESA and the City of Toronto are separate authorities with different jurisdictions. The ESA governs all electrical installations and modifications in Ontario under the Ontario Electrical Safety Code. The City of Toronto Building Division governs structural, mechanical, and general building code compliance under the Ontario Building Code. A panel upgrade, rewire, EV charger installation, or generator hookup on its own needs only the ESA permit. But if you are finishing a basement, adding a room, converting a garage, or doing a major kitchen renovation, the City of Toronto requires a building permit for the construction work, and the electrical portion of that project still requires a separate ESA permit.

Here is where it gets practical for GTA homeowners. If you are finishing a basement in Toronto, the City requires a building permit (fees typically range from $400 to $1,500 depending on the scope), and your electrician separately pulls an ESA permit ($150 to $400) for the electrical rough-in — outlets, lighting circuits, smoke detectors, AFCI protection, and any dedicated circuits for appliances. The city inspector checks framing, insulation, and fire stopping. The ESA inspector checks the electrical installation. Both need to pass before you close up walls. Your general contractor coordinates the sequencing, but your electrician is responsible for the ESA permit and inspection.

For a secondary suite or basement apartment — which many Toronto homeowners are adding given the city's housing density push — both permits are mandatory, and the electrical requirements are more extensive. A legal secondary suite requires a separate electrical panel or sub-panel, interconnected hardwired smoke and CO alarms, proper circuit separation between the units, and compliance with the Ontario Fire Code. The ESA permit for a secondary suite electrical installation can run $250 to $400 given the number of devices and circuits involved.

The simplest way to know what you need: tell your electrician about the full scope of your project, not just the electrical component. A licensed electrician working in the GTA deals with both ESA permits and city building permit coordination regularly and can tell you exactly what permits apply to your situation. If your project involves multiple trades, the Toronto Construction Network at torontoconstructionnetwork.com can help you find both electricians and general contractors who handle the full permit process.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Toronto Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Kitchen Land
- Focus on Flooring and General Contracting
- Norseman Construction & Development
- A Renovation Company Toronto Corporation
- LMP Scaffolding Services

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Q8

Can I sell my house in Toronto if there is unpermitted electrical work?

You can sell your house with unpermitted electrical work, but you are legally required to disclose it, and it will almost certainly affect the sale price, buyer confidence, and potentially the buyer's ability to get insurance. Unpermitted electrical work is one of the most common issues flagged during home inspections in the GTA, and it creates real complications in Toronto's competitive real estate market.

Under Ontario law, sellers must disclose known material defects — and unpermitted electrical modifications are a material defect. If a home inspector identifies work that was not done to code or lacks an ESA Certificate of Inspection, the buyer's lawyer will flag it, and one of three things typically happens: the buyer asks for a price reduction to cover the cost of bringing the work up to code, the buyer requests that the seller hire a licensed electrician to permit and remediate the work before closing, or the buyer walks away. In a seller's market you might absorb the cost through a price reduction, but in a balanced or buyer's market, unpermitted electrical work can kill a deal entirely.

The insurance angle is equally serious. Ontario insurance companies are increasingly requiring electrical inspections as a condition of issuing new homeowner policies, particularly for older Toronto homes. If a buyer cannot get insurance because of unpermitted electrical work — say, an amateur panel swap or basement wiring without ESA inspection — they cannot close on the mortgage. Lenders require proof of insurance before funding. So unpermitted electrical work does not just reduce your sale price; it can structurally prevent the sale from completing.

The cost of retroactive permitting depends on the scope of the unpermitted work. If a previous owner added a few circuits without a permit but the work is otherwise sound, a licensed electrician can apply for a retroactive ESA

permit ($100 to $400), have the work inspected, and address any deficiencies. Total cost might be $500 to $2,000 including the electrician's time, permit fee, and minor corrections. If the unpermitted work is genuinely substandard — improper connections, wrong wire gauge, missing GFCI or AFCI protection, no proper grounding — the remediation cost can run $3,000 to $10,000 or more, depending on how much needs to be redone.

The practical advice for Toronto homeowners planning to sell: have a licensed electrician do a pre-sale electrical assessment. They can identify any unpermitted work, estimate the cost to bring it into compliance, and handle the ESA permit process. Getting your ESA certificates in order before listing eliminates one of the most common negotiation points in GTA real estate transactions and gives buyers confidence in the home's electrical safety. Toronto Electrical Repair can match you with a licensed electrician for a pre-sale assessment through the Toronto Construction Network.

Q9

What is the ESA Certificate of Inspection and why should I keep it?

The ESA Certificate of Inspection is the official document confirming that permitted electrical work in your home has been inspected and meets the Ontario Electrical Safety Code — and it is one of the most important documents a homeowner can have. Think of it as the electrical equivalent of a clean bill of health. Every time a licensed electrician completes permitted work and the ESA inspector approves it, a certificate is issued.

The certificate contains specific details: the date of inspection, the address, the scope of work that was inspected, the permit number, and the inspector's determination that the installation complies with the OESC. It is issued by the Electrical Safety Authority after the inspector physically visits your property, examines the work, verifies code

compliance, and confirms that everything is safe. If there were deficiencies that required correction, the certificate is only issued after the corrections pass re-inspection.

You should keep every ESA Certificate of Inspection you receive for as long as you own the home — and ideally pass them to the next owner when you sell. Here is why they matter in practical terms for GTA homeowners.

Insurance claims are the most critical reason. If an electrical fire occurs and your insurer investigates, one of the first things they look for is whether the electrical system was properly permitted and inspected. If recent electrical work was done without a permit — no certificate — the insurer may deny your claim, potentially leaving you liable for hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage. Ontario insurers have become increasingly strict about this, particularly for older Toronto homes where knob-and-tube remediation, panel upgrades, and rewiring are common.

Home sales are the second major reason. Toronto real estate lawyers routinely request ESA certificates for any electrical work done in the last 10 to 15 years. Buyers' home inspectors flag recent electrical modifications and ask for proof of permitting. Having your certificates organized and available speeds up the closing process and gives buyers confidence. Missing certificates on recent panel upgrades, rewires, or EV charger installations raise red flags that can delay or derail a sale.

Future electrical work benefits from having past certificates on file. When your electrician pulls a new permit for additional work, the ESA's records show the history of inspected work at your address. This gives both your electrician and the inspector a clear picture of your home's electrical system, making the permitting and inspection process smoother.

If you have lost a certificate, you can request a copy from the ESA. They maintain records of all inspections and can provide duplicate certificates, though there may be a small administrative fee. You can also check the status of permits at your address through the ESA's online lookup tool at esasafe.com. If you are planning electrical work and want to ensure the entire permit and inspection process is handled properly, Toronto Electrical Repair connects you with licensed electricians who manage ESA permits as a standard part of their service.

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- LMP Scaffolding Services
- On Time electric
- Canadian Expert Electricians

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Q10

How do I check if previous electrical work in my Toronto home was properly permitted?

You can check whether electrical work was properly permitted by searching the ESA's online permit lookup tool at esasafe.com, which shows the history of electrical permits and inspections at any Ontario address. This is a free search that any homeowner can do, and it is one of the most important steps when buying a home or inheriting a property with an unknown electrical history.

The ESA's database contains records of electrical permits going back many years, though the completeness of records varies — permits from before the ESA's digital record-keeping era may not appear. When you search your address, you will see a list of permits with their status: **closed** means the work was inspected and passed, **open** means a permit was pulled but no inspection was completed (a significant red flag), and you may also see permits marked as having deficiencies that were never resolved. An open permit from years ago suggests that an electrician started work, pulled the permit, but the work was never inspected — meaning it may not be code-compliant.

Beyond the ESA database, there are physical signs in your home that can indicate unpermitted work. Look inside your electrical panel — if there are breakers or circuits that are not labelled, wiring that appears to be different ages or types mixed together, or connections that look amateur (electrical tape instead of proper wire nuts, inconsistent wire colours, wires entering the panel without proper connectors), these are signs of work that may not have been professionally done or inspected. In older GTA homes — particularly pre-war houses in neighbourhoods like the Annex, Leslieville, or Cabbagetown — decades of incremental electrical additions by previous owners are common, and much of it predates modern permitting requirements.

For a thorough assessment, the best approach is to have a licensed electrician perform an electrical inspection of your home. This is different from an ESA inspection — it is a private service where an electrician evaluates your entire electrical system, identifies any code deficiencies, flags likely unpermitted work, and provides a written report. In the GTA, a comprehensive electrical evaluation runs $200 to $500 depending on the size and age of the home. This is particularly valuable if you have recently purchased a home, if your house was built before 1970, or if you suspect previous owners did DIY electrical work.

If the assessment reveals unpermitted work, your electrician can apply for a retroactive ESA permit ($100 to $400) to have the work inspected. If the unpermitted work meets code, the inspector will issue a Certificate of Inspection and the issue is resolved. If it does not meet code, your electrician will provide a quote to bring everything into compliance. The cost depends entirely on the scope — minor corrections might be $500 to $1,000, while extensive substandard work requiring significant remediation can run several thousand dollars.

If you are a Toronto homeowner who wants to check the permit history and overall safety of your electrical system, Toronto Electrical Repair can match you with a licensed electrician for a professional assessment through the Toronto Construction Network.

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Q11

What are the current Ontario Electrical Safety Code requirements for kitchen outlets?

The Ontario Electrical Safety Code requires that all kitchen countertop outlets be GFCI-protected, on dedicated 20-amp circuits, and spaced so that no point along the countertop is more than 900 millimetres from an outlet. These requirements are among the most specific and frequently cited sections of the OESC, and they come up constantly in GTA kitchen renovations.

The GFCI requirement exists because kitchens combine water and electricity — a dangerous combination. Every receptacle within 1.5 metres of a sink must have ground fault circuit interrupter protection. In practice, most electricians in the GTA install GFCI protection on all kitchen countertop circuits, not just those near the sink, because it is safer and avoids any ambiguity during the ESA inspection. GFCI breakers cost $35 to $55 each, or you can use GFCI receptacles ($15 to $25 each) at the first outlet in the circuit to protect all downstream outlets on that run.

The dedicated circuit requirement means your kitchen countertop outlets cannot share circuits with lighting, the dishwasher, the refrigerator, or outlets in other rooms. The OESC requires a minimum of **two dedicated 20-amp small appliance circuits** serving the kitchen countertop area. These circuits handle the heavy-draw appliances that homeowners use daily — toasters, kettles, coffee makers, stand mixers, air fryers — and having two separate

circuits prevents constant breaker trips when multiple appliances run simultaneously. In many older Toronto homes, particularly the post-war bungalows across Scarborough and North York, the kitchen may have only one 15-amp circuit serving all countertop outlets, which is why breakers trip every time you run the toaster and coffee maker at the same time.

Beyond the countertop circuits, kitchens also require **dedicated circuits for major appliances**: the refrigerator gets its own 15-amp circuit, the dishwasher gets a dedicated 15 or 20-amp circuit, and if you have a built-in microwave, range hood, or garbage disposal, each may need its own circuit depending on the amperage draw. An electric range requires a dedicated 40 or 50-amp circuit with appropriate wire gauge — typically 8/3 NMD90 for 40A or 6/3 for 50A.

The spacing requirement ensures that homeowners are not stretching cords across countertops to reach outlets — a safety hazard that also violates code. The rule is that no point along the countertop wall should be more than 900mm from a receptacle. For island countertops, at least one outlet is required if the island has a long dimension of 600mm or more and a short dimension of 300mm or more.

All new or replaced kitchen outlets must also be **tamper-resistant** — those are the outlets with the built-in shutters that prevent children from inserting objects. This is a code requirement throughout the home, not just kitchens.

During a kitchen renovation in the GTA, the electrical component typically runs $2,000 to $5,000 depending on how many circuits need to be added or upgraded. The ESA permit for kitchen electrical work ranges from $150 to $300 based on the number of devices. If your kitchen renovation involves bringing the electrical up to current code, find a licensed electrician through Toronto Electrical Repair who can handle the ESA permit and inspection process from start to finish.

Q12

Is my electrician supposed to pull the ESA permit or do I need to do it myself?

Your licensed electrician is the one who pulls the ESA permit — homeowners cannot apply for electrical permits in Ontario unless they are doing the limited DIY work the code allows on their own primary residence. This is a fundamental part of how the ESA permitting system works, and it is actually one of the easiest ways to confirm that you are dealing with a legitimate electrical contractor.

The ESA's permitting system is tied directly to the electrician's licence. When your electrician applies for a permit, they log in to the ESA's contractor portal using their registered credentials, which are linked to their ECRA/ESA licence number. The permit is issued in their name and their company's name, and they are personally responsible for ensuring the work meets the Ontario Electrical Safety Code. This accountability is the backbone of the permitting system — the ESA can track every permit an electrician has pulled, every inspection result, and any deficiency patterns. Electricians with repeated failures face increased scrutiny and potential licence action.

For homeowners, this means the permit process should be completely hands-off. You hire a licensed electrician, agree on the scope of work and price, and the electrician handles the permit application, pays the fee (which is included in your quote — typically $100 to $400 for residential work), completes the work, schedules the ESA inspection, and addresses any deficiencies. You receive the Certificate of Inspection once the work passes. The only thing you need to do is be home during the inspection (or have someone over 18 present) and keep the certificate in your records.

Here is the critical red flag: **if an electrician asks you to pull the permit yourself, or says a permit is not needed for work that clearly requires one, walk away.** An electrician who avoids the permitting system is either unlicensed, has had their permit-pulling privileges suspended by the ESA, or is trying to avoid the accountability that comes with inspection. All three scenarios put you at serious risk — unpermitted work can void your insurance, create liability issues at resale, and most importantly, may not be safe.

There is one narrow exception. Ontario homeowners can do very limited electrical work on their own primary residence without a licensed electrician — specifically, like-for-like replacement of existing outlets, switches, and light fixtures on existing circuits. For this limited scope, a homeowner technically can apply for a permit through the ESA's homeowner permit process, though most homeowners doing simple device replacements do not pull permits for this level of work. Any work beyond simple device replacement — adding circuits, upgrading panels, installing new wiring — requires a licensed electrician and they pull the permit.

When getting quotes for electrical work in the GTA, ask each electrician to confirm that the ESA permit is included in their price. You can verify any electrician's licence status at esasafe.com before hiring. Need help finding licensed electricians who handle the full permit process? Toronto Electrical Repair matches you with professionals

in your area for free through the Toronto Construction Network.

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Q13

What is the cost to bring old electrical work up to current Ontario code during a renovation?

The cost to bring old electrical work up to current Ontario Electrical Safety Code standards during a renovation ranges from $2,000 for minor upgrades to $15,000 or more for extensive remediation in older GTA homes. The actual cost depends heavily on the age of your home, the scope of the renovation, what existing wiring is in place, and how much of the electrical system the renovation exposes.

The Ontario Electrical Safety Code has a practical provision that affects every renovation project: the **"once you touch it, you upgrade it"** principle. If you open walls during a renovation and expose existing wiring, the ESA inspector will require that any visible electrical work meet current code standards. This means a bathroom renovation that opens walls may trigger a requirement to add GFCI protection, upgrade wiring from 14-gauge to 12-gauge on 20-amp circuits, install tamper-resistant outlets, and add AFCI protection on applicable circuits. You are not required to rewire your entire house just because you renovated one room — but everything within the scope of the renovation must comply with the current code edition.

For older Toronto homes, here is what the most common code upgrades cost during a renovation. **GFCI protection** where the code now requires it — bathrooms, kitchens, garages, outdoor outlets, unfinished basements — runs $200 to $350 per outlet if new wiring is needed, or $35 to $55 per circuit if you are adding GFCI breakers at the panel. **AFCI protection** on bedroom circuits costs $30 to $50 per AFCI breaker, plus any wiring modifications needed to isolate those circuits — a common issue in older homes where bedroom and hallway outlets share circuits with other rooms. **Tamper-resistant outlets** are inexpensive ($3 to $8 per device) but must be installed on all new or replaced receptacles.

The bigger costs come when the renovation reveals fundamental deficiencies. If your 1950s Scarborough bungalow still has a 60-amp fuse box and you are finishing the basement, the ESA inspector will likely require a panel upgrade to support the additional circuits — that is $2,500 to $4,500 for a 200-amp panel upgrade. If the renovation exposes aluminum branch circuit wiring (common in 1965-1975 GTA homes), remediation using approved AlumiConn connectors runs $3,000 to $8,000, or $5,000 to $12,000 for the more permanent COPALUM crimp method. If knob-and-tube wiring is discovered in the walls you have opened, it must be replaced in that area — typically $150 to $300 per circuit run.

The ESA permit for renovation electrical work runs $150 to $400 depending on the number of devices and circuits involved, and your electrician includes this in their quote. The inspection process during a renovation has a specific sequence: your electrician completes the rough-in (running wires, installing boxes), the ESA inspects the rough-in before walls are closed, then walls are finished, and a final inspection confirms everything is complete. Missing the

rough-in inspection means potentially opening finished walls later — a costly mistake.

The smartest approach for any GTA renovation is to have your electrician assess the full electrical scope before you start. They can identify what code upgrades the project will trigger, include those costs in the initial quote, and coordinate the ESA inspection schedule with your contractor's timeline. Toronto Electrical Repair can connect you with licensed electricians experienced in renovation electrical work through the Toronto Construction Network directory.

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