

Arc Fault Breaker Tips for Residence Hall Rooms

What Are Arc Fault Breakers?

Arc fault breakers are safety devices designed to protect you and the building from electrical fires. They automatically shut off power when they detect unsafe electrical activity, such as sparking, damaged wiring, or electrical surges.

While these breakers help keep our residence halls safe, they can trip if outlets are overloaded or appliances are used improperly.

Smart Plugging Habits

- **Avoid overloading outlets**
Plugging too many devices into one outlet = higher chance of tripping
- **Use power strips wisely**
Use only approved power strips with built-in surge protection
Do not plug one power strip into another (daisy-chaining)
- **Give high-power appliances their own outlet**
Appliances that draw more electricity should not share outlets with other devices. Examples include: MicroFridge units, coffee makers, hair tools, etc.

Use Appliances Safely

- Only use **approved residence hall appliances** – follow all policies and guidelines (LINK)
- Avoid damaged or cheap cords, they can cause electrical arcing
- Avoid low quality electrical devices - inexpensive plug-in devices, such as air fresheners and decorative electronics may cause electrical surges that can trip breakers
- Unplug items when not in use (especially heat-producing devices)
- **Check appliance wattage** - follow the wattage requirements in the policy guide to avoid overloading circuits. As an example: purchase small coffee brewers (4-5 cup) that are less than 900 watts.

Common Causes of Tripped Breakers

- Space heaters (not permitted in residence halls)
- Hair dryers operating at the same times as other high-powered devices
- Loose, damaged, or worn-out plugs and cords
- Multiple appliances sharing the same outlet or power strip (i.e. gaming systems, computers, and TVs sharing a circuit with hair dryers, coffee makers, or other heat-producing appliances)

If Your Power Goes Out

1. **Check your room** – did you overload something?
2. **Unplug a few devices**
3. **Submit a work order to reset the breaker** (LINK)

Pro Tips

- Spread devices across multiple outlets
- Keep cords in good condition
- Unplug devices/appliances when they are not in use
- If you're unsure whether an appliance is allowed or appropriate, contact the Housing Office
- When in doubt, **plug in less - not more**