

Residence Hall Breakers – How to Prevent Tripping

Tripping your room's breaker is a nuisance, but it can easily be avoided by managing your electrical loads properly and following the [Residence Hall Policies](#), which limit the use of high-wattage appliances. **All appliances brought into the residence halls must be less than 900 watts.**

North and South Halls are equipped with arc fault circuit breakers (AFCIs). These safety devices are designed to protect you and the building from electrical fires by automatically shutting off power when they detect unsafe electrical activity, such as electrical arcing, damaged wiring, or other abnormal electrical conditions.

Below are some tips to help you minimize the risk tripping your breakers.

Smart Plugging Habits

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

Use Appliances Safely

- **Use only approved residence hall appliances** – follow all policies and guidelines: https://issuu.com/uwyo/docs/university_of_wyoming_housing_policies_procedure
- **Check appliance wattage before purchasing.** All appliances must be less than 900 watts. For example, choose a small 4–5 cup coffee maker that is less than 900 watts.
- **Avoid damaged or worn cords and plugs.** Damaged electrical components can create electrical arcing and increase the risk of a breaker trip or fire.
- **Avoid low-quality electrical devices.** Inexpensive plug-in devices, such as some air fresheners and decorative electronics, may malfunction or create electrical surges that can trip arc-fault breakers.
- **Unplug items when they are not in use**, especially heat-producing appliances.

Common Causes of Tripped Breakers

- **Space heaters** – Space heaters are not permitted in residence halls.
- **Hair dryers** operating at the same time as other high-powered devices.
- **Loose, damaged, or worn-out plugs and cords.**
- **Multiple appliances sharing the same outlet or circuit**, such as gaming systems, computers, and TVs operating at the same time as hair dryers, coffee makers, or other heat-producing appliances.

 If Your Power Goes Out

1. **Check your room.** Think about what you were using when the power went out. Did you have several high-powered devices operating at the same time?
2. **Unplug a few devices.** Disconnect some appliances and devices before attempting to restore power.
3. **Submit a work order.** (<https://www.uwyo.edu/living/housing/work-orders.html>) Housing staff will reset the breaker and can help determine what may have caused it to trip.

 Pro Tips

- **Spread devices across multiple outlets** when possible.
- **Keep cords and plugs 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** (living@uwyo.edu or 307-766-3175).
- **When in doubt, plug in less - not more!**