



The following information has been gleamed from several websites on Zinsco Electric Panels. If you have an old Zinsco panel I would strongly urge you to view these sites.

Zinsco Electric Panels

May Leave Homes and Homeowners at Risk

Most Zinsco panels are obsolete today. However, at one time, they were extremely popular and installed in many regions throughout North America. As time has passed, electricians and home inspectors have discovered that certain Zinsco panels often can fail to operate properly and may leave homes and homeowners at risk to both fire and electrical shock. These panels can work fine for years, but as homes have increased energy demands, these panels may overheat and portions of it melt.



In this situation, if a breaker melts to the bus bar of the panel and can no longer adequately trip in case of an over-current or short circuit, an extreme amount of power from the outside electrical supply surges into a home's panel and circuits. Once that happens, it cannot be stopped or shut off manually. Electricity will burn until it runs out of fuel or the wires melt. The panel could overheat and catch fire, causing serious harm to a home and its occupants.

Expert Opinions on Zinsco Panels!

Dan Friedman is an educator, author, and building failures researcher. He's committed a great deal of his time and resources documenting issues related to Zinsco panels. A wealth of information can be found on his website: <http://www.inspect-ny.com/electric/Zinsco.htm>

Damage Created by Zinsco Panels:

The Panels Produce Hazardous Situations

Zinsco panels may seem to work properly for years. But experts warn that these panels may present numerous problems and even hazards if and when they fail. In fact, one expert warns that as many as 25% of all Zinsco circuit breakers could fail to trip in response to an over-current or short circuit and create a possible hazardous situation.

Problems with certain Zinsco panels cannot be seen by the naked eye. Even after the cover of Zinsco panels has been removed, everything can seem to be in fine working order. Upon exploring its components, electricians find that breakers cannot be removed from the bus bar. They've welded together, which indicates that the breakers have melted. In that condition, a breaker would be unable to trip and may be allowing an unsafe amount of electricity into the home! This could lead to a potential fire.

Please, do not attempt to remove breakers from your own panel to see if they've melted. Only licensed electricians should. Zinsco panels can be electrical shock risks; they can appear to be shut off but are still conducting electricity!



ADVICE FOR OWNERS - Zinsco Electrical Panel Advice for Homeowners and Home Buyers

Zinsco and Zinsco-Sylvania circuit breakers of the design described here do not offer the level of over-current and fire protection provided by most other electrical panels and circuit breakers.

With the exception of the more seriously failing [FPE Stab-Lok](#) electrical panels, we have not received any significant number of field failure reports concerning *other* electrical panel brands that also use aluminum parts and that are or were priced in the same range as Zinsco. This means homes with this equipment may be at greater risk of fire or other electrical hazard.

Limited test results reported by [J. Aronstein](#) indicate that the central Zinsco electrical panel and circuit breaker failure problem appears to be burn-ups at the clip-to-bus connection such as shown in our photo. The few circuit breakers tested by Dr. Aronstein were reported to trip within normal over-current limits. However a circuit breaker whose bus connection burns can lead to overheating damage to the circuit breaker itself, rendering it non-functional.

Photo of a burned and failed Zinsco main circuit breaker, courtesy of J. P. [Simmons](#) - Mr. Electric. Simmons adds: "In this case the failure damaged the main wire to a mobile home also (you can see the melted wire to the left of the main). This is a good example of why I do not like to see anyone remove these breakers. You can not tell how bad they are damaged by looking at them.



Where Zinsco and Zinsco-Sylvania electrical panels are discovered in buildings they should be replaced to reduce some very real fire and shock hazards. Building owners or electricians encountering problems with this equipment are asked to contact us to add that information to our electrical failure data base in an effort to develop accurate safety information which is then shared with appropriate federal and state agencies. Thanks to Mr. James Simmons, a licensed electrician with extensive field experience and the contributor of most of the photos and case reports at this web page.

Where Zinsco electrical panels and Zinsco circuit breakers are in use, arcing, contact point burn, and even circuit breaker case blow-out have been observed in the field. A principal Zinsco™ circuit breaker (or Sylvania™ or GTE-Sylvania™ or Kearney™ electrical panel using this circuit breaker) point of failure appears to be at the point of contact where the circuit breaker contacts clip onto the electrical panel bus, combined with the use of an aluminum electrical panel bus. As described at [HOW TO REPORT ELECTRICAL FAILURES](#), expert testing on this equipment has shown that circuit breakers do not trip about 25% of the time when exposed to overcurrent - risking overheating, fire and other hazards. The failure rate of competitive-brand circuit breakers is much less than 1%.

Readers wanting to read specific advice on what to do if their building contains a Zinsco electrical panel should first read [ADVICE FOR ZINSCO OWNERS](#), then also see [HOW TO REPORT ELECTRICAL FAILURES](#) to homeowners when a Zinsco Sylvania™ electrical panel is observed by a contractor, home inspector, or electrician.

In addition to advice on identifying Zinsco™ panels, inspecting Zinsco electrical panels, and repair/replacement advice, we provide field photographs of circuit breaker failures: overheating, burn-ups, failures to trip, over-current protection failure. This document includes field reports of failures and additional anecdotal evidence. See [ZINSCO FAILURE PHOTOGRAPHS](#) and [ZINSCO FAILURE REPORTS](#).