



# Is Your Challenger Brand Electric Panel Safe?

by Krisha Martzall

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## Certain types of Challenger electrical panels and breakers catch fire! Really!

Check your panel today, as Challenger was very popular in the '80s and '90s. Circuit breakers are designed to keep you and your family safe. However, there are a few brands of breaker still in use today that might not only fail to protect you — they could actually cause a fire. Add to this list the brand Challenger. The breakers in question are mostly found in homes built in the 1980s through much of the 1990s, and there are untold numbers of these breakers still in homes today.



**If you live in the Lancaster County, PA area and are unsure as to the age of your electric service or panel, please set up a service call request with the Brubaker Inc. Electrical Team. If you are more than 25 miles outside of Lancaster, PA, please call a local electrician in your area for assistance.**

A circuit breaker is designed to trip during an overload or short circuit, thereby cutting off the flow of electricity and preventing a fire. But if the breaker doesn't trip, the increasing current can cause the wires to overheat, and even ignite. Over the years it was discovered that two types of circuit breakers manufactured by Challenger were



Photo courtesy washingtonelectric.net

overheating under NORMAL conditions at the connection point to the bus bar. This causes expansion and contraction, which in turn causes arcing between the circuit breaker and the bus bar, thus damaging both. As this would continue over time these components would actually melt down completely, causing hazardous conditions such as fire and/or shock hazard.

A melted electrical panel can be incredibly dangerous, so many homeowners whose homes were manufactured more than two decades ago find themselves in need of replacement panels.

Challenger products did not always feature the Challenger brand name. Many of them were also labeled as GTE-Sylvania or Zinsco. These faulty breakers also wound up being sold to many other brands and caused many recalls to take place

around the country. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of homes used these faulty products and many of those were affected by the overheating malfunction.



Photo courtesy InspectAPedia.com

Homeowners should first try to locate products in their breaker panels with these brand names. It is quite likely that any such products will need to be replaced right away.

Fortunately the Challenger products in question are no longer manufactured. In fact, Challenger is no longer in business; the remaining product lines were acquired by Eaton/Cutler Hammer.



**If you live in the Lancaster County, PA area and are unsure as to what brand of electric panel or breakers that you might have, or if you know that you have Challenger products in your system, please set up a service call request with us at Brubaker Inc. If you are more than 25 miles outside of Lancaster, PA, please call your local electrician for assistance.**



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