

Strictly Embargoed Until:
April 18, 2012

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Highlights: Electricians

For many people, working with electricity is one of those jobs best left to a professional. With ratings of 20 local electricians, *Boston Consumers' CHECKBOOK* magazine and www.checkbook.org put the power in your hands to find top-quality electrical work at a fair price. Below are some of the findings included in CHECKBOOK's electricians article.

- CHECKBOOK's researchers found big price differences among local companies. For example, the cost to replace a ceiling light fixture with a customer-supplied new ceiling fan with light attachment ranged from \$123 to \$370, with an average price of \$221. Price quotes to run wiring for a new outlet for an electric clothes dryer ranged from \$150 to \$350, with an average price of \$257.
- The key to finding a good price is to get several bids. Getting three bids rather than one is likely to result in savings of hundreds of dollars on a major job.
- You don't have to pay more to get high-quality work. CHECKBOOK found that firms receiving top-quality ratings were as likely as not to have below-average prices.
- Although it's always better to get a fixed-price bid, you'll likely only be able to get firms to come to your home to bid on large jobs, and you'll only be able to get bids by phone when you know exactly what needs to be done.
- Before using any contractor, ask for proof that it is licensed and carries both liability and workers' compensation insurance.

For many small installation jobs and most repair jobs, you'll have to pay on a time-and-materials basis. To find a firm that charges reasonably for its time, there are several questions to ask:

- Is there a minimum charge for a service call? How much time does it cover? Is travel time charged against this minimum?
- What time units are used—quarter hours, half hours?
- How much is charged per time unit—and are fractions of units rounded to the nearest unit or to the next *higher* unit?
- How many electricians does this rate cover?

The media may cite selected examples of top-rated electricians, as shown in *Boston Consumers' CHECKBOOK*, and CHECKBOOK's editors are available for interviews. Please call Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 to schedule.

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