

Question: At a recent cottage inspections in the Wakefield area, I noticed 20 amp fuses on circuits designed for a 15 amp fuse. This is not the first time I have seen this in cottage properties and feel that it needs to be addressed.

Answer: When a fuse box is initially installed by an electrician, each circuit is designed to carry a specific load. Both the fuse and the wire are rated for that circuit. If a 15 amp circuit; which generally uses 14 gauge wire, blows a 15 amp fuse, that circuit has either been overloaded or short circuited. The 15 amp fuse has popped for a reason. If at that point you replace that same circuit with a 20 amp fuse, there is a high probability that if that same circuit is overloaded again the electrical wires may start to melt or burn. They are simply not designed to carry that much of a load . A 20 amp fuse will also be tricky to install in the space designed for the 15 amp fuse, but with some ingenuity it is quite possible, as some of you already know ! So to re-cap, a 15 amp fuse uses 14 gauge wire which is a general household circuit. A 20 amp fuse will use 12 gauge wire and is designed for use of hot water tanks, baseboard heaters or other specialty circuits. A 30 amp fuse uses 8 or 10 gauge wire and is designed for stoves and dryers requiring 220 volts. Mixing and matching the fuses with incorrect wire sizes could be a fire hazard. If you have an older fuse box with fuses, take a few minutes and verify that you are using the correct size fuse.

Remember that your window air conditioner , which you have been using with all this great warm weather , should be on its own 15 amp curcuit !!

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