The area behind the distribution box is empty



Overview

A failing distribution box usually presents as uneven drainage in your yard. Some areas of your drain field get too much water while others stay dry.

Key Takeaways

An empty area behind a distribution box should be properly covered to prevent electrical hazards and maintain safety compliance.

Understanding the Empty Area

The space behind a distribution box may appear empty if a circuit breaker or other component has been removed, or if the box was designed with extra capacity for future expansion. This area is typically part of the enclosure that houses busbars, terminals, fuses, and circuit breakers, which are essential for distributing electricity safely throughout a building. While the empty space itself is not unusual, it can pose a safety risk if left exposed.

Safety Concerns

Unused or vacant openings in electrical equipment are considered electrical hazards because they can expose live conductors.

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A regulations (1910. 303(b)(7)(i)) require that all unused openings in boxes, cabinets, or housings be effectively closed to provide protection equivalent to the wall of the equipment. Exposed openings can allow accidental contact with live parts, increasing the risk of electric shock or short circuits.

Improper temporary covers like tape or cardboard are not acceptable.

Proper Handling

To safely manage an empty area behind a distribution box: Use a filler plate: Manufacturers provide inexpensive filler plates designed to cover unused openings in panelboards. These plates restore the protective barrier and prevent accidental contact with live components. Inspect regularly: Conduct visual inspections to ensure all openings are covered and no live parts are exposed.

Plan for future expansion: If the empty space is intended for future breakers or circuits, ensure that the area remains safely enclosed until components are installed.

Summary

While an empty area behind a distribution box can be normal, it must be covered with an appropriate filler plate to maintain electrical safety and compliance with regulations. Leaving it open exposes live conductors and creates a hazard, so proper maintenance and inspection are essential.

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