

# The Hidden Danger of Chewed Wiring from Rodents in Your Home

## Why Rodents Chew Wires and Why It Matters

When I first started working in pest control in Cleveland TN, I figured the biggest complaint would be noise. Scratching in the walls, scurrying across the attic floor, maybe a squeak or two. And sure, those sounds drive people crazy. But the real trouble, the kind that keeps me up at night, is the damage you cannot hear. Specifically, the chewed wiring from rodents that hides behind drywall, inside crawl spaces, and above ceiling tiles. It is quiet, it is dangerous, and it is far more common than most homeowners realize.

Rodents have to gnaw. Their incisors never stop growing, so they chew on whatever they can find to keep those teeth filed down. Wood, drywall, plastic pipes, and yes, electrical wiring. A rat or mouse does not know it is creating a fire hazard. It just knows the copper inside a wire feels good against its teeth. Over my years doing rodent exclusion work, I have pulled enough gnawed cables out of attics and soffit vents to fill a small recycling bin. The damage is real, and it is often invisible until something stops working or, worse, something catches fire.

## How Rodents Get to Your Wires

Understanding how rodents reach your wiring starts with entry point identification. A mouse can squeeze through a gap the size of a dime. A rat can get through a hole the size of a quarter. That means any crack, loose soffit vent, unsealed ridge vent, or gap around a gable vent is a potential doorway. I have seen rats climb straight up brick walls and enter through a missing gable vent screen. I have watched mice slip through tiny gaps where the roofline meets the fascia. Once they are inside, the attic and crawl space become their highways.

From there, they follow the path of least resistance. Wires often run along beams, through insulation, and across joists. To a rodent, these look like convenient travel routes. And because wires are often tucked away in dark, quiet spaces, they become prime real estate for nesting. A nest built on top of or against [chewed wiring from rodents](#) is a recipe for disaster. The combination of dry nesting material, rodent urine, and exposed copper can lead to shorts, sparks, and eventually structural fires.



## **Beyond Fire: Other Risks of Chewed Wiring**

Fire is the headline risk, but it is not the only one. Chewed wiring can knock out security systems, sump pumps, and HVAC controls. I have been on calls where a homeowner lost power to half their basement because a rat chewed through a main cable. The repair cost hundreds of dollars, and the rodent was still in the house. Mouse damage to low-voltage wiring is also common. Thermostats, doorbells, and alarm sensors all rely on thin wires that rodents can sever in one bite.

Then there is the risk of shock. If a wire is exposed and a person or pet touches it, the result can be painful or even fatal. Rodents themselves sometimes die from electrocution when they bite through a live wire. A dead rodent in a wall cavity creates a smell that is hard to live with and even harder to fix. I have had to cut open walls to remove a decomposing rat that died mid-chew. It is messy, unpleasant, and completely avoidable with proper prevention.

## **Signs You Might Have Rodent Damage**

You do not have to wait for a blackout or a fire to know you have a problem. There are signs. Look for gnaw marks on the edges of soffit vents or around gable vents. Check your attic for droppings near wiring runs. If you see small piles of insulation that look shredded, that is a nesting sign. Listen for scratching at night, especially near the ridge vent or along the roofline.

And if you find steel wool or copper mesh that has been pushed aside, that means a rodent has already found a way around your defenses.

Another telltale sign is unexplained power flickers in certain rooms. If the lights in your living room dim for no reason, or a GFCI outlet keeps tripping, it could be that a rodent has partially severed a wire. Partial cuts create resistance, which generates heat. That heat can melt insulation and start a fire long after the rodent is gone. I have seen it happen. It is not a theory; it is a pattern I have observed in homes across Cleveland TN.

## **Prevention: What Actually Works**

Preventing chewed wiring from rodents is not about poison or glue boards. Those treat the symptom, not the cause. Real prevention starts with rodent exclusion. That means sealing every gap, crack, and vent opening before a rodent ever gets inside. For soffit vents, ridge vents, and gable vents, I recommend a combination of copper mesh and caulking. Copper mesh does not rust, rodents cannot chew through it, and it holds up to weather. Steel wool works too, but it corrodes over time. Copper mesh lasts longer.



For larger gaps around pipes or wires entering the house, use a combination of copper mesh and expanding foam rated for pest exclusion. Do not rely on caulking alone; rodents can gnaw through dried caulk. The mesh provides a physical barrier that stops them cold. This kind of structural repair is not glamorous, but it is the only way to keep rodents out for good.

Trapping also plays a role, but it should come after exclusion. If you trap without sealing entry points, you are playing whack-a-mole. Kill one rat, and three more will move in from the same hole. I always tell homeowners to think of wildlife control as a two-step process: first, close the door. Then, deal with whoever is already inside. That is the approach hiwassee pest control uses, and it works because it addresses the root cause.

Inside the home, focus on the attic and crawl space. These are the most vulnerable areas. Inspect them seasonally. Look for fresh gnaw marks on wood or wires. If you find any, call a professional who does rodent proofing. A good exclusion service will identify every potential entry point and seal it with the right materials. They will also check for existing damage and help you decide whether a wire needs to be replaced or just repaired.

## **When to Call a Professional**

Some homeowners are handy. They can patch a soffit vent or stuff copper mesh into a gap themselves. But there are times when you need a pro. If you suspect chewed wiring is already causing electrical problems, do not try to fix it yourself. Exposed wires can shock you, and a partial short can start a fire while you are working. Call an electrician first, then a pest control company to seal the entry points.



If you have a large infestation, especially rats, the risk of rat bite or secondary damage goes up. Rats are strong chewers. They can gnaw through aluminum siding and PVC pipes. A single rat bite can sever a control wire for a garage door or a well pump. I have seen it happen. And because rats reproduce fast, a small problem can become a big one in a matter of weeks.

## **Final Thoughts**

Chewed wiring from rodents is one of those problems that feels small until it is not. A little scratching in the wall, a flickering light, a dead outlet in the garage. These are not just annoyances. They are warnings. The good news is that prevention is straightforward. Seal the gaps, use the right materials, and inspect regularly. If you live in Cleveland TN, you know the seasons bring rodents looking for warmth. A little effort now can save you a lot of headache later. And it might just save your home.