

Q Electrical outlets are no longer required in kitchen islands or peninsulas under the 2023 National Electric Code (NEC). When they are installed in an island, they can no longer be below the surface of the countertop or work surface. How are other contractors dealing with this change?

A *Michael Anschel of OA Design+Build+Architecture in Minneapolis responds:* Minnesota is one of the states that has adopted the 2023 NEC without amendments. The change hasn't been a problem for us, and we haven't had any pushback from designers or clients.

I've been at this for 30 years, and I remember when the last codes came in, we had to figure out where to put all the outlets that were required, whether they were going to be used or not. So, it's been a relief to us that we aren't required to put outlets in kitchen areas that are clearly decorative or in eating spaces where there is no need to plug in a blender or coffee grinder. We recently completed a big island, and under the old code,

we would have had to install eight or nine outlets in it. Instead, the client opted for two pop-up outlet towers that were nicely spaced in the middle of the island to serve the whole area.

Cost is a factor with pop-ups. The ones we used in that island cost around \$160 each, giving the client 12 outlets, each with USB (both A and C types). So, we saved money on all the outlet wiring we would have had to do under the old code.

Pop-up outlets range from around \$150 to \$600 with lots of choice in colors and features. These devices have been around for 20 years or so, and the code-rated ones available now are waterproof and have gaskets to keep out water and debris. The ones we've used seem



Hezi's pop-up countertop outlet, available at Amazon, also provides wireless charging in both the closed (above left) and the open (above right) positions. It retails for about \$200 in assorted finishes.

well-made, so I am not particularly concerned about their durability. We just put in a Hezi pop-up that the client purchased from Amazon for \$200 that installed well. We have been having discussions in our office about which ones to make standard for our operation. Our electricians have suggested an offering from Hubbell, which makes a discreet single-plug pop-up with USB A/C on the other side (hubbell.com). The downside, of course, is having only one outlet, but this device offers wireless charging on top, which is a useful consolation. Lew Electric Fittings (lewelectric.com) sells a giant tower of outlets for those who want just one pop-up hub, starting at around \$250. And Point Pod makes a motorized pop-up that you can finish with a piece of the countertop material; once installed, it is almost invisible with just a narrow edge of the sleeve showing. At about \$600, these are among the most expensive of the pop-ups we've seen (pointpod.com).

Amazon and other retailers have hundreds of types and styles, but it is best to check that they are code compliant.

Pop-ups are not the only option, however. We have found two-level counters to be a nice place to put outlets, especially on a peninsula. I have been a fan of that look, as it keeps the cooking mess out of the eating/working area.

We have had some clients opt for no outlets; in those cases, you are required to provide a run from which a homeowner could choose to have an outlet in the future. We run a line to a cabinet and terminate to a junction box. I think this is a good provision of the code, and it provides the homeowners or future homeowners with options.

From top right to bottom right:
Connect Silver pop-up outlet by
Point Pod; Pur20GACBTQD pop-up
outlet with Bluetooth speaker by Lew
Electric; and TradeSelect polished
chrome pop-up outlet by Hubbell.

