



Safe Extension Cord Use

Extension cords deliver electrical power to where it's needed. But when they are misused, they can also become electrical hazards.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that some 3,000 people are treated each year for injuries associated with extension cords. In addition, the CPSC reports that improperly functioning extension cords cause 5,000 residential fires annually. The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) suggests following these cord safety tips to help avoid shock and fire hazards.



- Remember, extension cords are intended for temporary use.
- Never run extension cords through walls, under rugs or furniture, or across doorways.
- Never try to repair a damaged extension cord with electrical tape; replace it instead.
- Never overload an extension cord. If any part of the cord feels warm to the touch, the cord is drawing too much power and could present a fire or shock hazard.
- Never cut off the ground pin to connect a 3-prong appliance cord to a 2-wire extension cord or receptacle. Always use a UL-listed adapter for this purpose.
- Replace older extension cords if one of the prongs in the plug is not "polarized." In a polarized plug, one prong will be wider than the other.
- Do not allow extension cords to dangle from counters or tables, where someone could accidentally pull them down or trip over them.
- Always plug an appliance in to the extension cord before plugging the extension cord into a wall receptacle. Also, make sure the appliance is "off" before plugging it in.
- When disconnecting an extension cord, pull from the plug, not the cord itself.
- Cover unused outlets on the extension cord to prevent children from making contact with a live circuit.
- Before buying any extension cord, check to ensure that the product has been listed by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Under-writers Laboratories (UL) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA)
- Use special, heavy-duty extension cords for high-wattage appliances such as air conditioners, portable electric heaters and freezers.
- When placing furniture or an appliance directly up against a wall where a cord is plugged into a receptacle, use a low-profile type of plug. These plugs will let the appliance or furniture get closer to the wall, and there is less chance of the plug coming loose.
- Outside the home, use extension cords designed expressly for outdoor use.

For more electrical safety tips, visit www.electrical-safety.org.