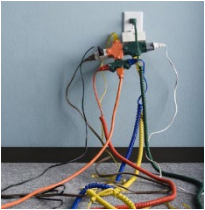




## MONTHLY SAFETY TOPIC – May 2025

### Power Strip Safety: Watt You Don't Know *Can* Hurt You

May is National Electrical Safety Month and a good time to review valuable information on the safe use of power strips. These are often the most used and misused electrical items in both workspaces and homes, increasing the potential hazards of fire, shocks, burns, and trips and falls. Awareness of these hazards can help reduce these risks and create a safer workspace for everyone.



Typically, power strips are inexpensive, multi-outlet products that are merely an expansion of a wall outlet. They also have distinct limitations in the amount of electricity they can accommodate. With what seems like the promise of endless

outlets available, they are often unintentionally misused. The average power strip has a maximum wattage capacity of 1800 and an amperage capacity of 15-20. This is the total capacity for *all items combined* that will be plugged into the strip. It is generally adequate for low energy use items such as computers, chargers, AV equipment, and phones. Any equipment with higher capacity should be plugged directly into the wall outlet.



In breakrooms and workspaces, bringing in the comforts of home in the form of coffeemakers, toaster ovens, and microwaves can make the day more enjoyable, like a hot lunch or the wafting smell of a fresh pot of coffee during a workday. To safely enjoy them it is essential to know the wattage and amperage requirements of these appliances. A single heating appliance such as a coffee maker or toaster oven often already meets or exceeds the limits of a power strip. All high current equipment such as coffee makers, microwaves, toaster ovens, and space heaters should be plugged directly into a wall outlet to prevent overload.



Power strips do not play well together. Plugging additional strips into one another to increase outlet spaces (also known as "daisy-chaining") might seem like a nice shortcut to increase access but is actually quite risky. It does not increase the amperage or wattage available and can easily overload, leading to short circuits, equipment damage, and even fires. It is also very important to check all electrical equipment for any damage prior to use and dispose of all damaged equipment.



While shocks and burns account for many of the injuries associated with power cords, one of the most common hazards may surprise you. The US Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that roughly half of all injuries associated with power cords involve fractures, lacerations, contusions, or sprains from people *tripping over* cords. Slips, trips, and falls also account for more than half of workplace injuries, and cord placement for electronic devices plays a significant role in this. Cords should not be placed in walking paths, across doorways, or other high traffic areas where they may create a trip hazard.



Power strips provide a convenient way to deliver electrical power where it is needed. When used within guidelines and following safety awareness practices, regular use of this equipment is acceptable and can enhance the workspace. So, enjoy your coffee, power up all those daily devices, and look over the attached Fact Sheet for additional information on a safer electrical workspace.



# Power Strip and Extension Cord Safety Fact Sheet



## Do



- **Do** inspect all cords for physical damage before use.
- **Do** remove and replace any cords that are frayed, damaged, have exposed wires, or other signs of wear.
- **Do** learn the capacity of the main outlet you are using and compare with the capacity requirements of the equipment you are plugging into the extension cord or power strip.
- **Do** check the wattage rating on the appliance or tool that the extension cord or power strip will be used with; do not use an extension cord or strip that has a lower rating.
- **Do** use low current equipment such as computers, phones, chargers, and AV equipment in power strips.
- **Do** plug high current equipment such as coffee makers, toaster ovens, and microwaves directly into a wall outlet.
- **Do** make sure all equipment and extension cords bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory such as UL (Underwriter's Laboratories).
- **Do** make sure the plug on extension cords and power outlets are fully inserted into the outlet.
- **Do** replace an outlet if a plug is too loose in the outlet.
- **Do** match up the plug and extension cord on a polarized cord (one hole on the plug is larger than the other).
- **Do** keep extension cords, power strips and all electrical equipment away from water.
- **Do** use GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) protection when using extension cords in wet or damp environments.
- **Do** pull on the plug, not the cord, when removing an extension cord from the outlet.
- **Do** unplug extension cords when not in use.
- **Do** cover cords that run across walkways with a cord cover\* to prevent trips and falls.
- **Do** remove and replace any extension cords or power strips that are hot to the touch as they are in imminent risk of failure.

## Don't

- **Don't** use an extension cord marked for indoor use outdoors.
- **Don't** plug one extension cord or power strip into another.
- **Don't** plug an extension cord into a power strip.
- **Don't** overload power strips or extension cords with more than the rated electrical load.
- **Don't** plug high current equipment such as coffee makers, toaster ovens, and space heaters into power strips.
- **Don't** run extension cords through doorways, ceilings, or walls.
- **Don't** remove, bend, or modify any of the metal parts of the extension cord plug.
- **Don't** plug a three-prong plug into a two-hole extension cord.
- **Don't** force a plug into an outlet.
- **Don't** use an extension cord or power strip if it is wet.
- **Don't** cover an extension cord with anything.
- **Don't** drive over an extension cord.
- **Don't** attach extension cords to the wall with nails or staples.
- **Don't** run extension cords under rugs or carpets or in high traffic areas.

\*Contact your District Safety Coordinator or Safety Committee to request cord covers.

