

EXTENSION CORDS AND POWER STRIPS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

FIRE SAFETY

**A fire safety article by Jackie Silveri,
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It was a great new condo Jocelyn thought as she rearranged the living room furniture for the fifth time. She just couldn't make the layout work because the electrical outlets were too far from the lamps. After a lot of shifting, she realized an extension cord would do the trick! She carefully concealed the extension cord under her new area rug and across the room to the surge protector cord; which then reached perfectly to the wall outlet. Jocelyn was pleased with herself that the cord would not be a tripping hazard.

As the months passed, Jocelyn and her roommates continued to use the extension cord to power the lamps and gradually they added other electrical items to the power strip. It was so convenient having all the extra outlets!

What they did not realize was that the extension cord under the carpet was gradually breaking down from foot traffic and was overheating due to high levels of power being pulled through the cord.

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Extension Cords and Power Strips: What You Need To Know!

Jocelyn and her roommates were unaware of the safety hazards of extension cords until the day a fire sparked from the cord, turning their living space into an inferno within minutes.

According to the NFPA, extension cords account for more than 3300 home fires each year.

You should always inspect your extension cords before use to check for any damage. See the infographic for 12 additional safety tips to help you protect your home and your business.

From time to time, we all use extension cords - in the office and at home. Be safe by educating yourself on the proper usages and capabilities of the extension cords. Do not use the cords for items like refrigerators or air conditioning units.

You can learn more about extension cord safety from your electrician or by visiting the website for the National Fire Protection Association.

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12 Important Safety Tips

- **NEVER use an extension cord or a power strip with portable heaters or fans. The cords can overheat due to the amount of power being pulled through them, causing a fire.**
- **Extension cords are NOT a permanent fix. They are intended for temporary use.**
- **DO NOT plug extension cords into one another.**
- **DO NOT overload extension cords or power strips.**
- **Do not run extension cords through your walls, ceilings, or floors. The heat cannot escape because the cords are covered, (example: cord under carpet).**
- **Never use an extension cord to power an appliance, such as a refrigerator or freezer. Appliances require a significant amount of power, and must be plugged in at the wall outlet.**
- **Do you check your cords when you buy them? Buy only cords that are approved by an independent testing laboratory. Look for UL or SA or ETL.**
- **Never cut the grounding pin to force a 3-prong plug to a 2-prong outlet. This can cause electric shock.**
- **Do not nail or staple electrical cords to walls or baseboards.**
- **If you find yourself heavily relying on extension cords, it is time to call in a professional electrician and have a few new wall outlets installed.**
- **Use extension cords based on their rating, such as indoor or outdoor.**
- **Lastly, but extremely important is to educate yourself on the amperage limits of the cords you are using. Did you know the length of the cord will determine the power capacity? Every extra foot of cord increases the electrical resistance; which in turn decreases the amount of power the cord can bring to the device. ALWAYS use the shortest extension cord possible.**

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