

Toolbox Talks

SAFE USE OF EXTENSION CORDS



Improper use of extension cords is a common cause of fires and workplace electrical accidents.

GENERAL SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXTENSION CORDS

- ✓ Cords should only be used for temporary “in hand now” tasks.
- ✓ If not in use for a period of time, then they should be unplugged and coiled up. (Vehicle heater cords are the exception).
- ✓ Cords should always be uncoiled before use. Otherwise, they can heat up and the insulation can be damaged. Avoid kinking and excessive bending.
- ✓ Extension cords should always be used with ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection.
- ✓ Only heavy duty extension cords, 14 AWG or larger, should be used in the workplace. Ungrounded “zip cords” should not be used.
- ✓ Care must be taken not to pinch cords with equipment, furniture, vehicles, or allow excessive foot traffic over them. Never run extension cords under rugs.

PROHIBITED USES FOR EXTENSION CORDS

Safety standards prohibit certain uses for extension cords. They are:

- **Use in lieu of permanent wiring.** If a cord is used as a “permanent” fixture in your workplace, then you need an electrician to install more receptacles!
- **Through holes in walls and ceilings**
- **Concealed behind walls or ceilings**
- **Attached to building surfaces**
- **Through doors and windows or against sharp surfaces**

