



EXTENSION CORD SAFETY

Prevent Extension Cord Hazards

The winter holiday season is the most common time of year for the purchase of new electrical equipment, including extension cords.

Extension cords are a leading cause of electrical fires, and can cause injury and death if used improperly. With continuous and excessive use, cords can rapidly deteriorate, creating a potentially dangerous electric shock or fire hazard.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) reminds everyone to be safe this holiday season by following important safety tips when using extension cords.

Tips for Selecting an Extension Cord

- Purchase cords from authorized retailers that have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Will the extension cord be used indoors or outdoors? When purchasing an extension cord for use outdoors, make sure that it is rated "for outdoor use."
- Extension cords come in a variety of lengths. Select a cord that is long enough to meet your needs. Never attempt to extend the length of an extension cord by connecting it with another extension cord.
- Extension cords are manufactured differently depending upon the current (amperage) and power (wattage) rating requirements. Cords that are rated for higher current and power will generally contain thicker insulation and larger gauge copper wire.

Safety Tips

- Examine extension cords before each use. Cracked, frayed, or otherwise damaged cords should be replaced immediately.
- Make sure that extension cords do not run under furniture or carpeting.
- When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant, heavy gauge extension cords marked "for outdoor use." These cords have added safeguards designed to withstand the outdoor environment.
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strands clear of snow and standing water, and well protected from the elements.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way. Touching even a single exposed strand can result in an electric shock or burn.
- Extension cords are meant to provide a temporary solution and should not be used as a long-term or permanent electrical circuit.

Facts & Statistics

- More than two-thirds of Americans use extension cords for outdoor purposes around the home.
- Roughly 84 percent of these homeowners own cords that are rated for outdoor usage.
- Only 27 percent of Americans inspect extension cords frequently or every time they use them.
- More than 78 percent of homeowners use extension cords as permanent wiring.
- Most homeowners (66%) expect to use at least one extension cord to bring power to outdoor decorations during the holidays.
- An estimated 3,300 residential fires originate from extension cords each year, killing and injuring over 300 people. (Source: *U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission*)
- One-third of homeowners report owning six or more extension cords.