



Carnegie Mellon University

Environmental Health & Safety

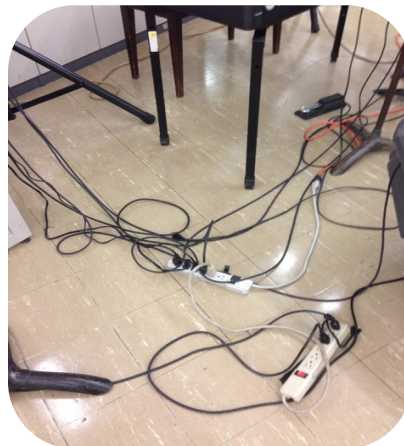
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Electrical Fire Safety

Now more than ever we need to pay close attention to the use of electrical wiring and appliances. Almost everything we do relies on electrical power. From computers and kitchen appliances to power tools and even cars, we are prone to the risk of electrical fires.

Best Practices

- One of the most common electrical hazards is the improper use of extension cords and power strips. These devices should never be run through holes in walls or ceilings, under carpeting or furniture or in high traffic areas where they could be subject to damage. Inspect these devices frequently to check for fraying, missing grounding pins or other damage.
- Extension cords and power strips are designed for temporary use only and should not be used as a permanent power source.
- Extension cords and power strips should never be connected together (as picture below) or used to power heat producing appliances or other high amperage equipment. This can include things like refrigerators, microwaves, coffee pots, portable saws and more. It is critical that these items be plugged directly into a wall outlet. However, you will still want to make sure you are being mindful of how many items you are plugging in at once within a room or area. Operating multiple high amperage appliances or equipment can easily exceed the capacity of the wall outlet or electrical circuit.



- Make sure that lamps or other lighting fixtures contain bulbs that meet the wattage requirements of the device they are installed in. Also ensure that lamp shades or other protective devices are installed to prevent combustible materials from touching the hot bulb and potentially igniting.
- Never sleep with your phone or charger under your pillow.

Did you know?

Electrical outlets, light switches, junction boxes and electrical panels are all required to have a protective cover on them at all times. Aside from the inherent electrical shock hazards present by having protective covers missing from electrical equipment, there is another reason for these requirements. These protective enclosures are designed to contain any electrical arcs that may occur which is more prone to happen in areas where exposed wiring and connections are housed. As minor of a detail as it may sound, this can make the difference in preventing fires from occurring.

Standards for Safe Equipment

Any piece of electrical equipment or device, such as appliances, extension cords, power strips and more, should contain a label from a third party testing agency such as the Underwriter's Laboratories or Intertek. The presence of one of these labels shows that the product has undergone testing to ensure that it meets minimum established safety standards. Unfortunately, there are many manufacturers who attempt to sell cheaply made devices that do not meet these standards and have been the subject of many fatal fires. Anytime you purchase or use an electrical device, check to make sure that it contains a testing label such as one of the examples below.



Safety concern, training request, or other inquiry?
Reach out to the **[Environmental Health and Safety Department](#)** today!
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