Extension Cords

SafeTips from the Naval Safety Center

Quick and easy summaries to find out about something new you're doing or as a refresher for something you haven't done in a while. They're a great training tool to pass around at meetings, through e-mail, or post on bulletin boards.

Mishap Data

※ The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 4,000 people are treated in emergency rooms each year because they were injured while using extension cords.
※ Half the injuries involve fractures, lacerations, contusions, or sprains from people tripping over extension cords.
※ About 3,300 residential fires start with extension cords each year, killing 50 people and injuring about 270 others. The most frequent causes are short-circuits, overloading, damage, and/or misuse of extension cords.

Do’s and Don’ts

※ If an extension cord is not marked for outdoor use, use it indoors only. The UL label will tell you if it is OK for outdoors.
※ Inspect the cord before you use it. Look for areas that are cracked or frayed. If you find any, dispose of the cord.
※ The appliance or tool that you are plugging into the cord will have a wattage rating on it. Match this up with your extension cord. Don't use a cord that has a lower rating.
※ Don't run extension cords through doorways, or through holes in ceilings, walls or floors.
※ Make sure the appliance or tool is off before you plug it into the cord.
※ Make sure the plug is fully inserted in the outlet.
※ Don't remove, bend or modify any of the metal parts of the cord's plug.
※ Don't plug a three-prong plug into a two-hole cord.
※ You shouldn't have to force a plug into an outlet.
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- If the plug is too loose in the outlet, the outlet may be too old and needs to be replaced.
- Some cords are polarized; one hole on the plug is larger than the other. Match up the outlet and the cord.

**During use:**
- Keep away from water.
- Don't use it when it is wet.
- Keep it away from children and pets.
- Don't plug one extension cord into another.
- Don't overheat the cord. Uncoil it, and don't cover it with anything.
- Don't drive over the cord. Don't drag it on lay anything on it.
- Don't walk on it.

**After use:**
- Remove it from an outlet by pulling on the plug, not the cord.
- Store it indoors.
- Unplug it.