

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

Shocking News – Extension Cord Use in Schools By Derek Neubauer

Extension cords are a leading cause of electrical fires and can cause injury and death if used improperly. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission an estimated 3,300 fires originate from extension cords each year, killing and injuring over 300 people. More than half the injuries involve fractures, lacerations, contusions, or sprains caused by trips/falls over the extension cords. A heavy reliance on extension cords is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your electrical needs.

Do

- Visually inspect all extension cords for physical damage before use.
- Check the wattage rating on the appliance or tool on which the extension cord will be used; do not use an extension cord that has a lower rating.
- Make sure the all equipment and extension cords bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories).
- Confirm that the extension cord is fully inserted into the outlet and, if the plug fits too loosely, replace outlet prior to use.
- Make certain that the plug and cord are matched up on a polarized cord (one hole on the plug is larger than the other).

- Arrange that the slack is provided on the cord to prevent tension on electrical outlets. All extension cords should be unplugged when not in use.

Don't

- Use an extension cord marked for indoor use outdoors.
- Plug one extension cord into another.
- Overload extensions cords with more than the proper electrical load.
- Run extension cords through doorways, ceilings, walls, or floors.
- Plug a 3-prong outlet into a 2-prong extension cord.
- Force a plug into an outlet.
- Use an extension cord when it's wet.
- Overheat an extension cord; an overheating extension cord is the result of internal overload of the wiring.
- Place extension cords where they can be driven over.

- Attach extension cords to the wall with nails or staples.
- Run extension cords under carpets or in high traffic areas.

Using extension cords properly is critical to your safety. With continuous extended use, an extension cord can rapidly deteriorate, creating a potentially dangerous electric shock or fire hazard. Simple inspection of cords before use and limited utilization of extension cords as a temporary power source can prevent fires and trip/fall hazards in a school environment.

For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or sorr@cmregent.com.