TOOL BOX TALKS

ORYX
INSURANCE BROKERAGE INCORPORATED

Be Wary of Extension Cords

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that each year, about 4,000 injuries associated with electric extension cords are treated in hospital emergency rooms. About half the injuries involve fractures, lacerations, contusions, or sprains from people tripping over extension cords. In addition, CPSC also estimates that about 3,300 residential fires originate in extension cords each year, killing fifty people and injuring about 270 others. The most frequent cause of such fires are short circuits, overloading, damage, and/or misuse of extension cords.

Increasingly, we are using extension cords, power strips, and surge protectors for electrical devices such as computers. Make sure that these products carry a certification label from an independent testing lab such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). The tag should be permanently attached near the connector of the cord and on the underside of the casing of power strips and surge protectors.

To be safe, follow these precautions:

- Do not use extension cords as a replacement for fixed wiring. Extension cords are intended for temporary use with equipment not routinely used at a specific location.
- Equipment being plugged into the extension cord should be grounded where applicable.
- Use products that have grounded three-pronged plugs or the new polarized plugs with one blade slightly wider than the other.
- Never bend prongs or force a three-pronged connector into a two-pronged outlet.
- Make sure that the plug has a good solid connection to the outlet.
- Choose heavy-duty extension cords for high-wattage machines and equipment.
- Use one long cord instead of several shorter cords. Never connect extension cords in a series. A longer cord should have a larger diameter (thicker = safer).
- Use cords appropriate to the task and rated high enough for the job.
- Use extension cords appropriate for the conditions. For example, indoor and outdoor cords are constructed differently. Various types of cords are specifically constructed to resist moisture, heat, or chemicals.
- Extension cords are considered temporary power and shall be GFCI protected at the source.
- Don't overload cords. Multi-plug devices should contain an integral circuit breaker.
- Never splice or tap an extension cord.
- Keep cords untangled when in use and in storage. Keep stored cords loosely coiled in a dry place.
- Never disconnect a plug by pulling on the wire. Instead, grip the plug itself to pull it out of the socket.
- Inspect cords frequently to be sure that they are in good condition and are not frayed, cracked, punctured, or hot to the touch.
- Do not use or attempt to repair a defective cord with tape. If a new cord is unavailable, repairs should only be made by authorized personnel.

HOW THIS TOPIC APPLIES TO THIS JOB:

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ATTENDEES: Print Name / Signature (use back if necessary)

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DATE: _____

SUPERVISOR / FOREMAN SIGNATURE:

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JOBSITE / PROJECT#:

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