Safety Awareness

Brief Topic Safety Refresher Training For Associates

2024

Extension Cord Safety

Extension Cord Injury Statistics

Before we get into the proper precautions, it's important that you understand what it is that makes extension cords so dangerous. You may not look at electrical cords as a threat, which is a problem. Here are some relevant injury statistics pertaining to extension cords and the threat they can pose:

About 4,000 injuries each year are treated in hospital emergency rooms. Not all are electrical injuries. Half of these injuries involve fractures, lacerations, contusions, or sprains from people tripping over extension cords.

How to use Extension Cords Safely

Let's go over the things you should be doing. Again, it almost always reverts back to common sense. Here are some of the best practices to employ with safety in mind when using an extension cord on the worksite:

- Inspect cords prior to use. Look for broken prongs as well as damage to the protective cover that encapsulates the wires inside the cord.
- Only use extension cords that have gone through independent testing such as by the Underwriters Laboratory. These cords will have a "UL" marked on them.
- Place cords out of the way and out of conditions that could result in electrocution or damage to the cord.
- When the cord is not being used, unplug it and store it neatly out of the way of foot traffic.

By following these simple guidelines, you can ensure you and your co-workers are as safe as possible. Again, many people ignore the dangers of working with an extension cord. Don't let this happen to you.

Extension & Electrical Cord Safety Tips

Here are some of the other things you should be looking to avoid when working with an extension cord or electrical cord:

- Use extension cords only on a temporary basis. Do not use extension cords in place of permanent wiring.
- Do not remove the prongs of an electrical plug. If plug prongs are missing, loose, or bent, replace the entire plug.
- Do not use an adapter or extension cord to defeat a standard grounding device.
- Use extension cords that are the correct size or rating for the equipment in use. The diameter of the extension cord should be the same or greater than the cord of the equipment in use.
- Only use cords rated for outdoor use when using a cord outside.
- Do not run cords above ceiling tiles or through walls.
- Keep electrical cords away from areas where they may be pinched and areas where they may pose a tripping or fire hazard (e.g., doorways, walkways, under the carpet, etc.).
- Always inspect the cord prior to use to ensure the insulation isn't cut or damaged. Discard damaged cords, cords that become hot, or cords with exposed wiring.
- Never unplug an extension cord by pulling on the cord; pull on the plug.
- In locations where equipment be pushed against an extension cord where the cord joins the plug, use a special "angle extension cord" specifically designed for use in these instances.

Electrical Cord Designations

Extension cords often come with designations, especially in the workplace. These designations are the manufacturer's way of telling you how you are supposed to operate the electrical cord. It lets you know what's safe and what's to be avoided. Here are some of the designations and what they mean:

S: Designed for general use
W: Rated for outdoor use
J: Standard 300 Voltage Insulation
T: made from Vinyl Thermoplastic
P: Parallel Wire Construction (Air Conditioner Cords and Household Extension Cords)
O: Oil-resistant
E: Made from TPE

Many times, there will be many different designations together. For example, SJTW would imply that the extension cord is designed for general use, rated for outdoor use, standard 300 voltage insulation, and made from vinyl thermoplastic.

GFCIs can pose serious risks if you take for granted they are working correctly. Test GFCIs before their first use, before the first use following repair, after any incident, as well as on a regular basis at least every 3 months. When a GFCI trips, reset and then trip it using either a GFCI tester or the test buttons on the device and make sure this stops the current flow. If the device will not trip open, or if it trips and current continues to flow, the device is defective and must be replaced.

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