

Extension Cords:

Most facilities were not built with enough fixed wiring that is needed for everyday operations. However, facilities should use caution when substituting fixed building power with temporary power sources such as power-strips and extension cords.

The International Fire Code and NFPA 70 National Electrical Code both state that “Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be a substitute for permanent wiring.”

This means that the allowances in the codes for extension cords are meant to be used as a temporary solution until the facility can budget for the installation and/or upgrade for additional fixed wiring. Temporary Wiring (as defined by International Fire Code): Not to exceed 90 days.

COMMON ISSUES:

Some of the problems we find during annual inspections include overloaded power cords, daisy-chained cords, and the use of multi-plug adapters.

- 1.) Overloaded Cords: Facilities must be aware of the amperage capacity of a power cord and also must be aware of the amperage of the TV, Radio, VCR, etc., that is being plugged into the power cord—it cannot exceed the amperage of the power cord.
- 2.) Daisy-Chained Cords: Power cords shall be plugged directly into an approved receptacle. If the cord is not long enough, it is not acceptable to plug several cords together to obtain the needed length.
- 3.) Multi-plug Adapters: These devices are prohibited. If the outlet is a 2-plex, it is not acceptable to plug in a 6-plex in order to obtain more outlets.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Power strips: All power strips shall be either polarized or grounded and shall be equipped with overcurrent protection.

Securing Cords: When utilizing power cords, facilities must look at the placement of the cord so as they do not become a tripping hazard. However, cords shall not be permanently affixed to the structure, extended through walls, ceiling or floors, or under doors or floor coverings.

Splices: Flexible cords shall be maintained in good condition. Cords shall not have splices or show signs of deterioration or damage. Any cord found in this condition shall be removed immediately.

Med-Large Appliances: Items such as personal refrigerators, microwaves, vending machines, and fish tanks must be plugged directly into the wall outlet. No extension cords or strips would be allowed.

FEDERAL HEALTHCARE SPECIFIC

- Extension cords are not allowed.
- Protected power strips are permissible for temporary use only.
- NFPA 101, LSC does not define “temporary.”
- Absolutely no medical equipment can be plugged into a power strip. Must be plugged directly into the wall outlet.