

Toolbox Talk Training: Basic Electrical Safety – Avoid Misuse of Extension Cords

Think about how many tasks at work would be much harder—or even impossible—without electricity. Since a nearby electrical outlet is not always available, extension cords are often used to bring power to the work area. While they are commonly used and easy to overlook, extension cords must be selected and used carefully to avoid serious hazards. Here are some key safety concerns to keep in mind:

- **Overloading an Extension Cord** Extension cords are rated to carry a specific amount of electrical current, usually measured in amps. If equipment draws more power than the cord is designed to handle, the cord can overheat, fail, or even cause a fire. Always check the cord's amperage rating and compare it to the equipment's requirements. If needed, use a heavier-duty cord that is properly rated for the load.
- **Using Extension Cords as Permanent Wiring** Extension cords are intended for temporary use only—typically no more than 30 days. They should never be used as a substitute for permanent wiring. If cords are found run through walls, ceilings, rafters, or secured along structures for long-term use, this is not acceptable and must be corrected.
- **Running Cords Through Doors or Windows** Running cords through doors, windows, or similar openings can damage the insulation if the cord is pinched or repeatedly moved. Damaged insulation may expose live wires, creating a serious shock or fire hazard.
- **Using the Wrong Type of Cord Outdoors** Indoor-rated extension cords are not designed to withstand outdoor conditions such as moisture, heat, cold, or abrasion. Using them outside can lead to deterioration, overheating, or electrical failure. Always verify that the cord is rated for outdoor use before using it outside.
- **Removing Damaged or Unsafe Cords from Service** If you find an extension cord that is damaged, improperly used, or unsafe in any way, report it immediately. Unplug it if safe to do so and remove it from service so it can be repaired or replaced by an authorized person. Never attempt repairs unless you are specifically trained and authorized.

Can anyone share other examples of unsafe or improper extension cord use they have seen on the job? Thank you for attending today's toolbox talk. Please Free toolbox talk from Toolboxtalk.com 2017. Do not sell, modify, or use on commercial websites for profit. Remember to sign the training certification form to receive credit for your attendance.

