

Know What Hazards Can Occur

Extension cords were developed to facilitate work that was not convenient to an electrical socket. These conveniences can easily become hazardous if the workers who use them aren't safety conscious. Here's a small review of how some of these hazards can occur.

Tripping hazard

By far the most common hazard of an extension cord is a tripping hazard. Most people can remember at least one occasion when they've tripped over one.

Either we don't expect them to be in a place, or we're just careless while walking over them. This hazard can easily be eliminated by running the cord overhead and maintaining ample walking clearance. If you must leave it on the ground, place a board on either side of the cord so it doesn't protrude above the boards.

Tripping on a cord may snatch the plug, which can damage it to the point that it becomes an electrical hazard. Never use an extension cord as a substitute for permanent electrical wiring.

Use the right cord for the right job

Selecting the extension cord that is appropriate for the work to be done helps avoid a hazardous situation, too. Cords should be:

- the proper gauge
- properly grounded
- UL listed
- meet any additional electrical code specifications

Be sure the extension cord you're using is properly rated for the specific conditions in your work area, such as:

- moisture
- heat
- chemicals

The equipment to which the cord is attached should be properly grounded as well. Double check to be sure that you have the right electrical cord when you are working in boilers, tanks or other grounded enclosure.

Take good care of cords

It only takes a small amount of time to ensure that your extension cords remain in excellent condition.

- Never twist or kink the cord
- Always keep it away from any sharp objects
- Cover it with a plastic cover to protect the cord from solvents or oils

Cords in lamps

Do not use brass shell sockets. Lamp handles should be comprised of materials which are non-conductive to prevent metallic connection between the lamp guard and the socket shell.

Keep hands dry

As much as is possible, keep your hands dry since wet or sweaty hands can form an excellent ground if they are placed in contact with another good ground such as a wet floor, steam or water pipes or other electrical connections.

Regularly examine your extension cord

Don't use the cord if it is damaged. Period. It doesn't matter if the job is a quick one or if it's inconvenient to find or requisition a new one. Never use a damaged extension cord. Also don't overload an outlet by adding too many cords to the circuit.

Keep in mind the real reason that extension cords are available. They are designed for convenience and should be handled with care and used safely. When utilized correctly, they are a big help and a timesaver.

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