Extension Cord Care, Repair



Even a simple extension cord needs to be looked after. It’s a shock or fire hazard when deteriorated, worn-out or used improperly.

Do you know…

- The two types of extension cords?
- What determines if a cord is suitable?

Two-wire extension cords are used for a small appliance or two. Never use these for power tools unless the tool is double insulated.

Three-wire cords are for outdoor appliances and electric power tools. The third wire is a ground. Never plug these cords into an ungrounded electrical outlet. Use three-wire grounded cords with power tools.

Two key reminders:

- Never substitute extension cords for permanent wiring, and don’t staple an extension cord to a building. Replace the extension cords with permanent wiring when use of the cords is no longer temporary.
- Don’t disconnect an extension cord by pulling on the cord. Remove it by the plug; otherwise the end frays and loosens.

Choose proper cords and connectors for the job. Most industrial purposes require cords specified for either hard usage or extra hard usage. The word “outdoor” on the cord or the letters “WA” on the jacket identify approved cords.

Gauge size, strength, flexibility and ability to withstand chemicals determine a cord’s suitability.

Here are more extension cord safety tips:

- Protect flexible cords and cables from physical damage. Also check regularly for cut, broken or cracked insulation. If cords pose a hazard, either repair or discard and replace.
- Electrical cords can become tripping hazards. Don’t run them through doorways, walls, windows, ceilings or floors.
- When leaning forward, support the weight of your upper body on your free hand and arm. This relieves pressure on your lower back.

- Avoid plugging two cords together to make a longer one. Extension cords that are connected or too long will reduce operating voltage and efficiency of tools or appliances, perhaps damaging motors.

Even with proper care, extension cords can become damaged. Get qualified and authorized personnel to repair it, or replace the cord.

Qualified personnel know that the simplest way to test for correct wiring is to use a test light, which plugs into the end of the cord and indicates whether it has continuity and polarity. If not, the cord can be dangerous and the repair must be redone.

Don’t take shortcuts or chances with electrical safety, and don’t rely on unsafe practices such as unauthorized “repairs” of electrical cords.

Protect yourself and others from electrical fires and electrical shock by looking after even a simple extension cord. It’s worth it.