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MCAD EXTENSION CORD & POWER STRIP USAGE POLICY

Policy

The use of extension cords and multi-plug power strips (power strip) shall be limited to the following listed authorized situations and to specific requirements outlined in each situation. When a permanently installed receptacle outlet is not accessible or adequate, temporary extension cords, or power strips equipped with overload protection may be used if installed in accordance with the safety guidelines set forth in this policy.

Reference

Minnesota State Fire Code: MSFC 605.4, 605.5
National Fire Protection Association: NFPA 70 – National Electrical Code

Responsibilities

Safety Coordinator – Develop policy and disseminate to all MCAD departments. Conduct periodic inspections to verify compliance. Review policy and update on an annual basis.

All Departments – Require all employees and students to properly use extension cords and power strips. For new installations and relocations contact Facilities for proper power applications.

Facilities – Ensure adequate and code compliant permanently installed wiring is provided where necessary when extension cord and power strip usage is not allowed.

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to reduce the risks of electrical fires and safety hazards associated with improper use of extension cords and power strips. The policy provides guidance to staff, faculty, and students for the proper use of extension cords and power strips.

Policy Procedures

Extension Cords – The use of extension cords (properly insulated and grounded) is allowed in academic and residence buildings for the following limited situations:

- Maintenance staff may use insulated, grounded extension cords for normal maintenance activities, including construction, renovation, and repair work.
- Custodial staff may use insulated, grounded extension cords as needed to operate cleaning equipment and minor maintenance activities.
- Insulated, grounded extension cords for temporary use (not more than a day) for classroom audio-visual and computer equipment.
- Cord reels may be used to power portable tools and devices at work benches and studios for temporary projects.
- At the time of fabrication, shop-made extension cords shall be inspected and tested by MCAD electrician. Only qualified persons may repair shop-made extension cords including the installation of plug and receptacle to the cord.

Prohibited Extension Cord Use:

- Extensions cords are not to be used in lieu of permanent fixed wiring.
- Ungrounded extension cords are not to be used at MCAD.
- Extension cords are not allowed in residences except for portable equipment for temporary use by the student.
- Extension cords may not be enclosed in walls, ceilings, or under floors. Cords are to be protected from traffic and damage when used in all installations.
- Cords are not to tied or attached to pipes or structural members, under carpets, across high traffic areas.
- Damaged cords with cut or frayed insulation (tape repairs not allowed) or cords with missing ground connector are not to be used.
- Detachable multi-tap outlet adapters may not be used on extension cords and outlets.

Power Strips – Power strips are manufactured devices that house multiple grounded (3-prong) outlets, circuit breaker (overload protection), switch, cord, and plug assembly. In some cases the power strip may provide surge protection capabilities. A power strip is to be used when an electrical device/appliance cannot be plugged directly into a wall outlet and needs to be powered for extended periods. Power strips must be used according to the following procedures and situations.

- The cord length of power strips should not exceed 15 feet, be appropriate for the length or the application, and must have a UL rating marked.
- The equipment to be powered must be located as close to wall outlet as possible to minimize cord lengths.
- Power strips must be sized for the appropriate load and properly grounded and no other extension cord, adapter, plug extender, or another power strip maybe plugged into the power strip.
- Power strips must have adequate ventilation and be accessible to allow for proper operation and overload protection, and are not be routed through walls, in ceilings, or under floors.
- Power strips shall be kept in good condition, and must be checked periodically for cracks, frayed, or split insulation or damage to the outlet box and control.
- Power strips must be routed away from traffic. Cords must not be directly attached to structures, floors or walls.

Summary

As with all electrical wiring, devices and equipment, proper care and use of extension cords and power strips must be taken to assure the load is safely connected to electrical power. If permanent wiring cannot be provided or is impractical, extension cords and power strips are a safe and efficient means of providing power to the load if used properly in accordance with this policy. Contact the MCAD Facilities Department if there is any question as to the proper means of providing power.