7-Minute SAFETY TRAINER

Extension Cord Safety

Trainer Outline 330

Goals: ***This safety session teaches employees to:***

- Identify extension cord hazards.
- Choose the right extension cord for the job.
- Use extension cords safely.

Applicable Regulations: 29 CFR 1910.305

1. Understand Potential Hazards of Extension Cords

- Hazards associated with the use of extension cords, include:
  - –Fire
  - –Electrical shock
  - –Electrical burns
  - –Tripping
- Because extension cords are so commonly used in the workplace and at home, people often fail to appreciate the potential hazards associated with their use.

2. Choose the Right Extension Cord for the Job

- Only use extension cords with labels saying that they have been tested and approved by an independent laboratory (e.g., Underwriters' Laboratories (UL)).
- Extension cords are considered temporary wiring and are intended for only temporary use.
- The extension cord you choose will depend on whether you are using it indoors or outdoors and the length you need.
  - –Don't use indoor cords outside.
  - –Don't plug one cord into another to make it longer, which could start a fire; use a cord of the right length.
- Your choice of extension cord might also depend on conditions of use, such as whether it will be used in areas where there is moisture, heat, or chemicals.
  - –If so, select cords specially constructed to resist these conditions.
- The gauge and length of an extension cord tell you the maximum wattage of equipment the cord can power.
  - –Check the label on extension cords to determine length and gauge.
  - –The smaller the gauge, the larger the wattage of the equipment that can be used with the cord (e.g., a cord labeled 12-gauge can be used with higher wattage equipment than a 16-gauge cord).
  - –The longer the cord, the less current the cord can carry (e.g., a 20-foot extension cord can power higher wattage equipment than a 50-foot cord).
- The label on electrical equipment provides information about the wattage rating.
  - –To determine the wattage rating, multiply amps by volts.

- If you use an extension cord with more than one piece of electrical equipment, you must choose a cord that is safe to use with the total combined wattage rating of all the equipment.

3. *Use Extension Cords Safely*

- Inspect extension cords carefully before each use to make sure the cord and plug are in good condition.
- Insert the plug fully into the outlet and uncoil the cord to reduce the risk of overheating.
- Plug extension cords into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) when used in wet or damp areas.
- Make sure electrical equipment is turned off before you plug it into an extension cord.
- Don't run extension cords across aisles or through doorways where they may be damaged or create tripping hazards.
- Don't run extension cords under rugs, which could cause the cord to overheat and start a fire.
- Don't attach extension cords to floors or walls with nails or staples, which could damage insulation, expose wires, and cause an electrical shock and/or fire.
- Unplug extension cords when not in use.
- To prevent damage to outdoor cords, store them indoors when they are not being used.

4. *Take Appropriate Steps to Deal with Damaged or Defective Extension Cords*

- Normal wear and tear can damage extension cords and make them hazardous.
- Don't use cords that have damaged plugs or insulation, which increases the risk of electrical shocks and fires.
- Damaged cords should be replaced or repaired by a qualified person.
  - –Don't try to patch or repair them yourself.
  - –Put a tag on a damaged cord ("DO NOT USE") to prevent others from using it.

Discussion Points:

–Review your policy on the use of extension cords, emphasizing that extension cords are for temporary use only and should not be used as permanent wiring. Identify proper and improper uses for extension cords.

Conclusion: Use Extension Cords Safely

Extension cords can be hazardous if not used properly. Make sure you always choose the right cord for the job and use it safely.

Test Your Knowledge

Have your employees take the Extension Cord Safety quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can judge their ability to work safely with extension cords and whether they need to review this important topic again soon.