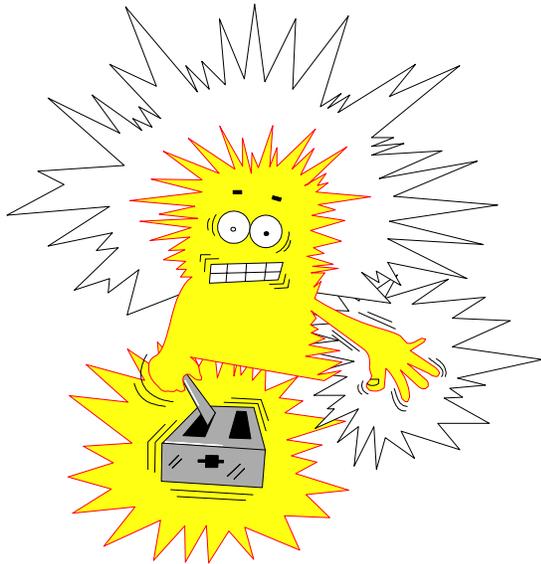


Extension Cords



One of the most frequently occurring violations cited during safety inspections is the use of extension cords. This problem is common to all areas of activity. Because of its universal nature, the use of extension cords is an issue that needs clarification and guidelines in determining the permissibility of its usage.

The National Electrical Code (NEC) does not refer to extension cords specifically but does assign the concept other names where appropriate specifications are outlined. As commonly used, extension cords are alluded to in the NEC in an oblique manner where their utilization is either in violation of, or in compliance with one or more stated NEC standards. It would be beyond the scope or intent of this outline to attempt any detailed defining of all the above stated standards mentioned in the NEC. THE NEC STANDARDS MAY BE SUMMED UP IN A GENERAL WAY BY SAYING THAT THE USE OF AN EXTENSION CORD REPRESENTS A CONFLICT WITH THE CODE BECAUSE IT SERVES AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR A RECEPTACLE THAT SHOULD BE LOCATED NEAR THE APPLIANCE OR EQUIPMENT. The primary consideration in determining the legal application of extension cords is that they are intended for temporary use with portable appliances, tools and similar equipment which are not normally used at one specific location. When using extension cords and their connectors, care should be taken to ensure they

are of the proper type and rating for their particular location. Equipment being supplied by the cord must be properly grounded where applicable. Listed below is a guideline which can be applied to the use of extension cords and their related equipment.

1. Extension cords shall be used only as temporary extensions for portable equipment. These devices may be acceptable in applications where they supply equipment not routinely used in an area where permanently wired receptacles are not available or installed. Cords shall be unplugged when not in use and never left plugged in while unattended.
2. Extension cords and their plugs shall be of a type suitable for the application, location and conditions under which they are to be used. Zip cords and light extensions made up of AWG 18 wire are rated for only 6 to 10 amps. In normal use these zip cords and light extensions are plugged into a 20 amp fused line and therefore offer no over current protection and are susceptible to overheating thereby creating a potential fire hazard when supplying loads nearing their rated current.
3. All cords and plugs should be maintained in a safe condition. Splices are prohibited. Worn out cords should be replaced. Plugs should be checked to ensure the cover for wire terminations are mechanically secure.
4. This equipment must not be draped near open flames nor used in areas where chemical or other physical damage may be a danger, nor wet locations which increase the potential shock hazard.

Source: MIT Accident Prevention Guide

