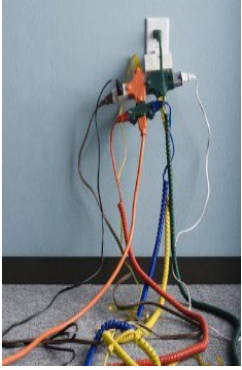




MONTHLY SAFETY TOPIC – May 2026

Power Strip Safety: Watt You Don't Know *Can* Hurt You

May is National Electrical Safety Month and a good time to review valuable information on the safe use of power strips. These are often the most used and misused electrical items in both workspaces and homes, increasing the potential hazards of fire, shocks, burns, and trips and falls. Awareness of these hazards can help reduce these risks and create a safer workspace for everyone.



Typically, power strips are inexpensive, multi-outlet products that are merely an expansion of a wall outlet. They also have distinct limitations in the amount of electricity they can accommodate. With what seems like the promise of endless outlets available, they are often unintentionally misused. The average power strip has a maximum wattage capacity of 1800 and an amperage capacity of 15-20. This is the total capacity for *all items combined* that will be plugged into the strip. It is generally adequate for low energy use items such as computers, chargers, AV equipment, and phones. Any equipment with higher capacity should be plugged directly into the wall outlet.



In breakrooms and workspaces, bringing in the comforts of home in the form of coffeemakers, toaster ovens, and microwaves can make the day more enjoyable, like a hot lunch or the wafting smell of a fresh pot of coffee during a workday. To safely enjoy them it is essential to know the wattage and amperage requirements of these appliances. A single heating appliance such as a coffee maker or toaster oven often already meets or exceeds the limits of a power strip. All high current equipment such as coffee makers, microwaves, toaster ovens, and space heaters should be plugged directly into a wall outlet to prevent overload.



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Power strips do not play well together. Plugging additional strips into one another to increase outlet spaces (also known as "daisy-chaining") might seem like a nice shortcut to increase access but is actually quite risky. It does not increase the amperage or wattage available and can easily overload, leading to short circuits, equipment damage, and even fires. It is also very important to check all electrical equipment for any damage prior to use and dispose of all damaged equipment.

While shocks and burns account for many of the injuries associated with power cords, one of the most common hazards may surprise you. The US Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that roughly half of all injuries associated with power cords involve fractures, lacerations, contusions, or sprains from people *tripping over* cords. Slips, trips, and falls also account for more than half of workplace injuries, and cord placement for electronic devices plays a significant role in this. Cords should not be placed in walking paths, across doorways, or other high traffic areas where they may create a trip hazard.



Power strips provide a convenient way to deliver electrical power where it is needed. When used within guidelines and following safety awareness practices, regular use of this equipment is acceptable and can enhance the workspace. So, enjoy your coffee, power up all those daily devices, and look over the attached Fact Sheet for additional information on a safer electrical workspace.

