Programs & Policies –

EXTENSION CORD, POWER STRIP, DECORATIVE LIGHTING, APPLIANCES SAFETY PROGRAM

1. Purpose and Scope

This program establishes standard guidelines for safe deployment, inspection, and utilization of appliances that generate heat or contain electric motors and temporary electrical power distributing devices such as extension cords, power strips, and surge protectors. This policy mitigates fire hazards and electrical shock risks across all academic, residential, and administrative facilities.

2. Authorized Equipment Specifications

All electrical equipment utilized within university facilities shall be listed, labeled, or certified by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL) such as UL, ETL, or CSA, and shall be installed and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Extension cords, power strips, surge protective devices, GFCI adapters, decorative lighting, appliances, and laboratory equipment shall comply with applicable OSHA, NFPA, and International Fire Code requirements.

3. General Cord and Power Strip Restrictions

3.1 Extension Cord Safety

- **Residence Hall Prohibition:** Extension cords are strictly prohibited in university student residences. UL-listed, surge-protected power strips with integral overcurrent protection must be used instead.
- **Temporary Use Only: I**n accordance with OAC 1301:7-7-06, extension cords shall only be used for temporary applications (such as events, maintenance, or active research setups) and shall not exceed 90 consecutive days. Cords must be plugged directly to an outlet and removed immediately upon the conclusion of the temporary task or event.
- **Prohibition of Permanent Substitution:** Extension cords shall not be used as a substitute for permanent wiring. They cannot be used to power permanent fixtures or appliances (e.g., long-term connection of refrigerators, water coolers, or computer monitors).
- **Testing and Listing Standards:** All extension cords must be listed and labeled by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL) in accordance with UL 817 (Cord Sets and Power-Supply Cords). Cords must bear the clear, undamaged mark of the independent testing laboratory.
- **Gauge and Electrical Load Requirements:** Listed 16 AWG extension cords may be used exclusively for light-duty office applications. Extension cords used for higher electrical loads shall be a minimum of 14 AWG, heavy-duty, or sized appropriately for the connected load in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- **Anti-Daisy Chaining Mandate: "**Daisy-chaining" is strictly prohibited under Ohio Fire Code Section 603.6.1. Extension cords, power strips, or surge protectors shall not be connected to

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one another, to multi-plug adapters, or to relocatable power taps. Cords must plug directly into a permanently installed receptacle.

- **Environmental Ratings:** Cords must be rated for their specific intended environment (indoor or outdoor). Outdoor cords must meet or exceed the power requirements of the connected equipment and be kept entirely clear of snow, ice, and standing water.
- **Pre-Use Inspection:** Cords must be inspected for physical damage prior to every use. Cords displaying cracked or frayed insulation, exposed wiring, loose connections, or missing ground pins must be removed from service and discarded immediately.
- **Physical Protection and Routing:** Extension cords shall not be affixed to structures with nails, staples, or tacks that could pierce the insulation. In accordance with OAC 1301:7-7-06, cords shall not be extended through walls, suspended or drop ceilings, under doors, or beneath rugs, mats, or carpeting where damage may go unnoticed.
- **Grounding Integrity:** A three-prong grounding plug shall never be forced into a two-slot outlet, and the grounding pin shall never be altered or removed. The grounding type of the cord must strictly match the configuration of the appliance.
- **Egress and Life Safety:** Extension cords must be routed to prevent trip hazards and shall not impede, cross, or block designated egress routes, exit doors, or walkways.
- **Infrastructure Remediation:** A heavy, ongoing reliance on extension cords indicates inadequate building infrastructure. For spaces requiring permanent power expansion, departments must submit an official facilities work order rather than deploying long-term temporary cord solutions.

3.2 Decorative Light String Safety

- Use miniature or LED lights.
- Decorative holiday lights and other string lighting must bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory and be rated for their intended use, indoor or outdoor.
- The manufacturer's instructions regarding maximum end-to-end connections shall not be exceeded.
- Heavy-duty or commercial-grade strings should be used where longer runs are needed.
- Strings must be inspected before each use for frayed wiring, cracked sockets, or exposed bulbs, and any damaged set must be removed from service immediately.
- Decorative light strings should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle whenever practical. Where additional connections are necessary, only UL-listed power strips equipped with overcurrent protection may be used.
- Outdoor displays must be plugged into GFCI-protected adapters/outlets and kept clear of snow and standing water.
- Lights must not be affixed with nails, staples, or tacks that could pierce the wire, and must not be draped over metal surfaces, combustible materials, or block exits.
- All decorative lighting must be turned off when the area is unoccupied or at the end of the business day and should be connected to a timer where left unattended for extended periods.
- Lighting is prohibited on metallic trees/objects. Decorative lighting displays shall not be attached to sprinkler piping, sprinkler heads, fire alarm devices, exit signs, or emergency lighting equipment.

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3.3 Power Strip Safety

- Power strips shall be plugged directly into a permanently installed wall receptacle.
- Power strips shall not be connected to another power strip, extension cord, surge suppressor, or multi-plug adapter.
- Power strips shall not be used to power appliances or equipment prohibited by Section 5.
- Power strips shall be equipped with integral overcurrent protection and bear the mark of an NRTL.

4. Appliances that generate heat or contain electric motors

4.1 Portable Space Heater Safety

- Portable space heaters are not permitted in any university owned or leased facility unless university facilities management has approved such use as a temporary measure to address inadequate heating by the building's HVAC system. Space heaters should not be used as a substitute for any required repair or maintenance of the HVAC system. Where approved, only electric space heaters that meet the safety criteria are allowed.
- Space heaters of any kind are strictly prohibited in all laboratories, all university student residences, and all areas primarily used for the storage of combustible materials.
- Purchase and use only heaters bearing the seal of a qualified testing laboratory, with a built-in thermostat and overheat protection.
- Keep heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, including people, and place them on a solid, flat surface.
- Use only heaters equipped with an automatic shut-off that engages if the unit tips over.
- Keep heaters out of the path of foot traffic and never let them block an exit; keep children away from operating units.
- Plug heaters directly into a wall outlet; never use an extension cord or power strip.
- Turn off and unplug the heater whenever leaving the room unattended.
- Open-coil, fuel-burning, kerosene, propane, and homemade heaters are prohibited.

4.2 Other appliances that generate heat or contain electric motors

- Any appliance or equipment incorporating a heating element, compressor, pump, blower, fan motor, refrigeration system, vacuum system, or other motor-driven component shall be connected directly to a permanently installed wall receptacle unless the manufacturer specifically authorizes an alternative connection method.
- Appliances and equipment covered by this section shall not be connected to extension cords, power strips, surge protectors, relocatable power taps, multi-plug adapters, or similar devices unless specifically permitted by the equipment manufacturer.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Refrigerators and freezers
- Microwave ovens
- Coffee makers and electric kettles
- Toaster ovens and air fryers

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- Portable air conditioners and dehumidifiers
- Autoclaves and sterilizers
- Laboratory ovens, incubators and hot plates
- Centrifuges and ultra-centrifuges
- Vacuum pumps and air compressors
- Water baths and heating mantles
- Biological safety cabinets and fume hoods with integral motors
- Commercial printers, copiers, and paper shredders
- Medical warming cabinets, blanket warmers, and fluid warmers

5. Additional power outlet needs

If a department desires additional power outlets, the department must submit a work order to facilities through email at **facilities@ysu.edu**. Requests will be evaluated based on operational need, institutional necessity, feasibility, and available resources.

6. Prohibited Electrical Equipment

The following are prohibited:

In Residence Halls:

- Space heaters, extension cords, multi-plug adapters, and unfused outlet splitters are strictly prohibited at all times. Students must use UL-listed power strips equipped with built-in surge protectors and internal circuit breakers.

In Academic, Administrative, and Laboratory Spaces:

- Multi-plug adapters ("cube taps") without integral overcurrent protection.
- Non-listed electrical devices.
- Homemade electrical equipment.
- Damaged cords, plugs, or receptacles.
- Open-coil space heaters.
- Fuel-burning heaters.
- Altered, modified, or damaged extension cords, including cords with missing grounding pins, taped splices, or exposed conductors.
- Unapproved portable cooking appliances in offices.

7. Inspection and Enforcement Protocol

Extension cords and power strips are temporary convenience devices and shall not be used as a substitute for permanent wiring. EHS personnel, Facilities Management personnel, and department supervisors may conduct periodic or unannounced inspections.

Equipment determined to be non-compliant or that presents an imminent fire, electrical, or life-safety hazard may be disconnected and removed from service immediately without prior notice.

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