Improper use of easily overloaded, unapproved extension cords can present a serious fire safety hazard in the workplace and home. It is estimated that each year about 4,000 injuries are associated with electric extension cords. About half of those involve people tripping over the cords. It is also estimated that there are about 3,300 home fires each year involving extension cord misuse. Follow these safety tips to protect your home and workplace.

- Inspect an extension cord for physical damage before use. Check for frayed sockets, loose or bare wire and loose connections.
- Check the wattage rating on the appliance or tool that the extension cord will be used with; do not use an extension cord that has a lower rating.
- Never use an extension cord while it is coiled or looped. It can overheat quickly.
- Use the appropriate length extension cord. Use special, heavy duty extension cords for high wattage appliances such as air conditioners, portables electric heaters and freezers.
- Make sure to use GFCI protection when using extension cords in wet or damp environments.
- Don’t drive over an extension cord.
- Don’t run extension cords under rugs or carpets or in high traffic areas. These are both tripping and fire hazards.
- Don’t run extension cords through doorways, holes in ceilings, walls, or floors. Heat cannot escape and can be a fire hazard.
- Don’t force a plug into an outlet.
- Don’t cover an extension cord with anything. Heat must be able to escape.
- Don’t plug a three-prong into a two-hole extension cord. Don’t move, bend or modify any of the metal parts of the plug. Never cut off the ground pin to force a fit, which could lead to electric shock.
- A heavy reliance of extension cords is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed where they are needed.
- Don’t plug one extension cord or surge protector into another.
- Make sure all equipment and extension cords bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory such as UL.
- Keep extension cords away from water.
- Don’t overload cords with more than the proper electrical load.

People First
Safety Always