

CBS Corporate Safety and Environmental Affairs

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Power Strips

Many of us work in an office environment and one question arises with some frequency, "Are we allowed to use power strips?" Power strips are commonly referred to as "Surge/Spike Protectors" or "Portable Outlets," and they typically consist of several components, such as multiple electrical receptacles, an on/off power switch, a circuit breaker, and a grounded flexible power cord. They are ubiquitous with most everyone's computer plugged into one instead of being plugged directly into a wall outlet. The short answer to the question is yes, the use of power strips is OK, but with some limitations.

Underwriters Laboratories (UL), refers to power strips as Relocatable Power Taps (RPTs) and, in its "General Information for Electrical Equipment Directory", describes RPTs as "relocatable multiple outlet extensions of a branch circuit to supply laboratory equipment, home workshops, home movie lighting controls, musical instrumentation, and to provide outlet receptacles for computers, audio and video equipment and other equipment.

Power strips must be directly connected to a permanently installed branch circuit receptacle; they are not to be series-connected to other power strips or connected to extension cords. This means power strips have to be plugged directly into a permanently installed electrical receptacle and they are not to be daisy chained. Power strips are not for use at construction sites and similar locations.

Power strips are designed for use with low-power loads, such as from computers, peripherals, or audio/video components. The basic rule is that outlet devices *must have an ampere rating not less than the load to be served*. Power strips are not designed for high power loads such as refrigerators and microwave ovens, which can easily exceed the recommended ampere ratings on many power strips. Power strips are also not to be routed through walls, windows, ceilings, floors, or similar openings.

In short, power strips are fine to use, but must be used properly. Plug them directly into a permanent receptacle, don't link them together or plug them into an extension cord. Only plug low power equipment into them such as a computer, printer and desk lamp. Do not use them to power refrigerators, microwave ovens or other high current equipment. Oh, and one more thing, make sure that the ground pin is present and that you only plug into 3-prong receptacles.

Sustainability:

We are continuing to focus on moving ahead with our sustainability efforts. We will be providing additional details at the EHS Council Meeting, October 17th and 18th.

Lithium

Battery

Shipment:

As regulatory issues continue to escalate with regard to the shipping of lithium batteries, we have developed a fact sheet for use by our news crew travelers.

For further information, contact:

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