

Guidelines for Extension Cord Use

Extension cords are only to be used for temporary purposes. They do not replace the need for installation of outlets and proper wiring where necessary.

Many questions have arisen regarding the restrictions on extension cords on campus. The following guidelines should be used by faculty, staff and students to ensure that the extension cords in use do not violate good safety practices or fire codes. The National Electric Code (NEC) is the primary document that provides guidance in the use of extension cords. These guidelines are based on the NEC.

In dormitories and office settings:

1. Extension cords which have the UL label are approved, so long as the size and use is appropriate.
2. Two and three conductor extension cords must have a minimum conductor size of 16 AWG copper.
3. Extension cords are normally rated in amps, and must be used within the ampere rating. (Compare the ampere rating of the appliance with the rating of the chord.)
4. Three pronged (three conductor) extension cords must be used when connecting electrical items that have three pronged plugins.
5. Extension cords must not be run under rugs, mattresses, through doorways or windows, and must be protected from damage at all times.
6. Three prong adapters are not to be used with two conductor extension cords on the female end of the cord. Adapters used on the wall outlet must be installed with a metal screw installed in the outlet. (Contact Facilities by Area, Splicing and "home repairs" of extensions cords are not permitted unless performed by Facilities or Housing Electricians. Insulation, strength and conductor size must not be compromised.
7. Cords used in wet and/or outdoor locations should be protected by ground fault circuit interrupters.

On maintenance and construction sites:

1. Extension cords with an equipment grounding conductor must be used at all times.
2. Extension cords must be protected from damage, and not run through doorways or windows where the doors or windows may close, causing damage to the cord.
3. Extension cords must be plugged into a circuit protected by a ground fault circuit interrupter on wet or outdoor construction and maintenance sites, or have the ground circuit checked for continuity in an assured grounding and conductor program.
4. Extension cords should be a minimum of 16 AWG and be rated for the equipment in use. The following is a guide that might be helpful in selecting the cord:

Extension Cord Ampere Rating

Wire Size (Copper)	Single Phase Two and Three Conductor Cords	Three Phase Cords
16 AWG	13 amps	10 amps
14 AWG	18 amps	15 amps
12 AWG	25 amps	20 amps
10 AWG	30 amps	25 amps
8 AWG	40 amps	35 amps
6 AWG	55 amps	45 amps
4 AWG	70 amps	60 amps
2 AWG	95 amps	80 amp

5. Splicing extension cords must be done in such a way that the insulation and conductivity of the wires are not compromised.
6. Extension cords should not be run through water or allowed to have connections that may be exposed to puddling water.

For more information contact: [Michael Hodgson](#), Campus Fire Safety Coordinator at 404.894.2990

[OSHA Link \(Electrical\)](#)

Avoid Extension Cords being utilized as fixed permanent wiring.



Avoid Extension Cord taped around the door.

