

The Gowrie Safety Report

Safety & Loss Prevention Insights



Extension and Flexible Cords: Safety Guidelines & OSHA Standards

Flexible extension cords are widely used at marinas, construction sites, yacht clubs, homes, businesses, and more. Because these cords are often exposed, flexible, and unsecured, they are highly susceptible to damage and misuse that can result in significant hazards. Following safety guidelines can enable effective and safe use of flexible extension cords in most common applications.

Gowrie Group recommends that you take the time now to review our safe usage guidelines and [OSHA's 1910.334 Flexible Cord and Plug Connected Equipment](#) standards.

Gowrie's Guidelines for Safe Usage of Extension and Flexible Cords:

- **Look for the UL Mark** on all extension cords that you purchase. It means that representative samples of the cord have been tested for all foreseeable safety hazards.
- **Never keep an extension cord plugged in when it is not in use**, since the cord will still conduct electricity until it is unplugged from the outlet. All extension cords should be unplugged at the end of shifts or when work has been completed, whichever comes first.
- **Examine extension cords before each use.** Cracked, frayed, or otherwise damaged cords should be replaced immediately. Touching even a single exposed strand of wire can result in an electric shock or burn.
- **Store all cords indoors when not in use;** outdoor conditions can deteriorate a cord over time.
- **When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant, heavy gauge extension cords** marked "for outdoor use." These cords have added safeguards designed to withstand the outdoor environment.
- **Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strands clear of snow and standing water** and well-protected from the elements.
- **Most new, indoor extension cords with more than one outlet have covers for the unused openings.** Make sure to use them.
- **To avoid overheating extension cords, make sure that they do not run under furniture or carpeting, or behind baseboards.** Do not run extension cords through doorways, windows, or holes in walls.
- **Polarized plugs (one blade wider than the other) are a safety feature** designed to prevent electric shock by properly aligning circuit conductors. If a plug does not fit, have a qualified electrician install a new outlet.
- **Never file or cut the plug blades or grounding pin of an extension cord** or appliance to plug it into an old outlet.
- **If the ground plug has "fallen" out of an extension cord,** discontinue use of the cord immediately.
- **Do not attempt to repair cords yourself.** This work needs to be completed by a qualified electrician.
- **Never plug an extension cord into an electrical source with wet hands,** or if either end of the plug is wet. Do not come in contact with or use any electrical items while standing in water.
- **Remember that extension cords are meant to provide a temporary solution** and should not be used as a long-term or permanent electrical circuit.



Gowrie's Safety & Loss Prevention insights are created by Kellie Crete. Kellie manages Gowrie Group's Safety & Loss Prevention practice area and has more than 25 years of experience in safety and loss control, and specializes in advising the marine industry and other niche segments of the commercial marketplace. Kellie is an OSHA authorized instructor. For more information, kelliec@gowrie.com, p: 860.399.2881, c: 508.509.3788, www.gowrie.com/safety

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