

Subject: Surge Protector and Power Strip Safety**May 2012**

Every year, thousands of fires are caused by surge protectors, power strips, and electrical cords.

To ensure safety at all times, and help prevent a fire from igniting:

- Use only surge protectors or power strips that have an internal circuit breaker. These units will trip the breaker if the power strip is overloaded or shorted to prevent overheating. If you are unsure whether the device has an internal circuit breaker, have it evaluated by a qualified professional.
- Surge protectors, power strips, or extension cords are not a substitute for permanent wiring. If you do not have enough electrical outlets to meet your needs, there should be a review by an electrician or qualified professional.
- If at any time the surge protector or power strip is hot to the touch, immediately remove and replace it. The electrical load for this strip should be evaluated by a qualified professional to ensure that it is not overloaded.
- At no time should a surge protector or power strip be exposed to a moist environment.
- Any surge protector or power strip that does not have an internal circuit breaker, has frayed wires, or is not working properly, should be replaced immediately.

Surge protectors and power strips should never be plugged into another surge protector or power strip. This practice is called “daisy chaining” or “piggy backing” and can lead to serious safety risks. Additionally, all surge protectors and power strips need to be Underwriters Laboratory (UL) or Electrical Testing Laboratories (ETL) approved. The UL or ETL label must never be removed from the unit. On the underside of the casing, there should be the manufacturer's name and the name of the lab where the unit was tested.

Other reminders:

- NEVER plug more than one surge protector or power strip into an electrical outlet.
- NEVER place surge protectors or power strips in any area where the unit would be covered with carpet, furniture, or any other item that will limit or prevent air circulation.
- NEVER use staples, tacks, or tape on a surge protector or power strip.
- NEVER drill or drive screws through a surge protector or power strip.

Every staff member has a responsibility to monitor the following, and managers and supervisors should conduct a periodic review that includes:

- Visually inspecting all surge protectors or power strips on a regular basis to ensure that they are not damaged or showing signs of degradation. During the visual inspection, ensure that the plugs are fully engaged in their respective outlets.
- Unplugging any surge protector or power strip that is not in use.
- Ensuring that the surge protector or power strip always has either a polarized plug with one of the blades being larger than the other or a three-prong grounded plug. Never use a three to two prong adapter to power the unit.
- Preventing use of surge protectors or power strips that have a cord of six feet or more in length.

Lastly, please remember that medical equipment should only be plugged into a surge protector or power strip specifically approved for that purpose. For additional information, please contact OPWDD's Office of Safety and Security at 518-474-9897.