

Moody Gardens and the use of extension cords, power strips and surge protectors.

With the winter season approaching remember the requirements of the Fire Marshal's Office and good safety practices.

1. Individual space heaters are not permitted at Moody Gardens. Do Not use any space heater under your desk or in your office.
2. Extension cords must be of a proper size to carry the electrical load necessary for the intended use. If you are setting up an exhibit or have any need for the use of an extension cord check with maintenance to make sure it meets the necessary electrical current requirements.
3. Extension cords may only be used as a temporary solution and must be removed within a reasonable time frame.
4. Power strips are not permitted at Moody Gardens. If you have a project that requires more outlets than available contact maintenance for possible solutions. Remember, room outlets are placed based on a circuit load. By adding a power strip you may overload an electrical circuit.

With the holiday season approaching and everyone getting ready to decorate their homes please read the information from the Consumer Product Safety Commission about hidden electrical hazards.

CPSC Warns Consumers About Faulty Extension Cords, Power Strips and Surge Protectors

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is warning consumers about millions of faulty extension cords, power strips and surge protectors that pose a fire, shock and electrocution danger. Since 1994, CPSC has announced 25 recalls involving 2 million extension cords, power strips and surge protectors because they have undersized wires, loose connections, faulty components or improper grounding. The defects in these products can result in fires or pose a shock or electrocution hazard to consumers.

Most of these substandard cords were sold at discount stores and small retailers for about \$1 to \$7. Most were made in China. Many have no identifying marks or model numbers. Some have counterfeit Underwriters Laboratories (UL) certification labels. Extension cords, power strips and surge protectors must be able to handle the amount of current required by the appliance. Defective cords fail to meet current industry safety standards and can be overloaded easily if they are used to plug in even small appliances.

"With computers, VCRs, and a growing number of other appliances in our homes, more consumers are using extension cords, power strips and surge protectors," said CPSC

Chairman Ann Brown. "Many meet current safety standards, but the poorly constructed models recalled in recent years are a hidden fire and electrocution hazard. You should check your home immediately and make sure you aren't using one of these recalled cords."

In 1997, CPSC began an investigation to monitor the extension cords, power strips and surge protectors sold in stores across the country. CPSC investigators inspected products sold through discount stores, mass merchandisers, dollar stores and hardware chains. After collecting suspect samples from 83 locations around the country, investigators found that 72 percent of the samples failed to meet current safety standards. CPSC also worked with U.S. Customs to monitor the extension cords, power strips and surge protectors shipped to U.S. ports. Many of the recent recalls of these cords were the result of this investigation.

In 1996, electrical cords and plugs were involved in about 7,100 fires resulting in 120 deaths or about 32 percent of all deaths associated with residential electrical system fires. In 1997, more than 12,000 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms for electrical burns and shocks and about 2,500 people were treated for injuries associated with extension cords.

CPSC provides these safety tips for consumers:

- Look for a certification label from an independent testing lab such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories) or ETL (Electrical Testing Laboratories) on the package and on the product itself. Products with this certification label meet current industry safety standards. For extension cords, look for a permanently attached certification label on the cord near the plug. For power strips and surge protectors, inspect the underside of the casing and make certain that it is marked with the manufacturer's name and the testing lab.
- Use electrical cords, power strips and surge protectors that have polarized plugs with one blade slightly wider the other, or grounded three-pronged plugs. These features reduce the risk of electric shock.
- Use special, heavy duty extension cords for high wattage appliances such as air conditioners, portable electric heaters and freezers.
- Extension cords used outside should be specifically designed for such use to guard against shock.
- Insert plugs fully so that no part of the prongs are exposed when the cord is in use.
- Never cover any part of an extension cord with rugs or other objects while it is in use. If the cord is covered, heat cannot escape, which can result in fire.
- Don't overload cords with too many appliances. Change the cord to a higher-rated one or unplug and relocate appliances to other outlets.
- Make sure cords do not dangle from the counter or table tops where they can be pulled down or tripped over.
- If a cord feels hot to the touch, stop using it and throw it away.
- Replace cracked or worn cords.

- Don't use extension cords to compensate for inadequate home wiring. Use extension cords only when necessary and only on a temporary basis.

CPSC is working with U.S. Customs to identify shipments of substandard cords before they reach store shelves. CPSC investigators are continuing to monitor the cords currently being sold in stores. The Commission also is working with Chinese trade officials to stop exports of substandard cords to the United States.