CrewSigned

Extension Cord Safety Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Extension cords are so common on the job that we hardly think about them. But a damaged or misused cord can shock you, start a fire or trip someone, and cords take a beating on a construction site. They get run over, pinched in doors, dragged across concrete and left in puddles. Today we are going over how to keep them safe.

Start with the right cord. On a job site, use heavy-duty cords rated for hard or extra-hard use, with three wires and a ground pin. Light household cords are not built for this work and should not be on site. Make sure the cord is rated for the tool you are running. A cord that is too small for the load, or too long, can overheat. If a cord feels hot, unplug it.

Inspect every cord before you use it. Look along the whole length for cuts, crushed spots, exposed wires, tape repairs and missing insulation. Check both ends for bent or missing prongs and cracked housings. The ground pin must be there. Never cut it off or use an adapter to get around it, because that pin is what protects you if something goes wrong inside the tool. If a cord is damaged, take it out of service and tag it. Do not tape it up.

Use GFCI protection. On construction sites, cords and tools should be plugged into a GFCI, either a GFCI outlet or a portable one. A GFCI shuts off power in a fraction of a second if current starts leaking, such as through your body. Test it before you use it.

Run cords smart. Keep them out of walkways, doorways and windows where they get crushed. If a cord must cross a path, cover it or hang it overhead. Keep cords out of water and away from heat, oil and sharp edges. Do not run them through holes in walls or ceilings, and do not staple, nail or hang them from nails.

Handle them right. Unplug by pulling the plug, not the cord. Do not carry tools by their cords. Do not daisy-chain cords together or plug a power strip into a cord.

At the end of the day, coil cords loosely and store them dry. A good cord can last years if we take care of it.

Discussion questions

1. Which cords on this site are damaged, too light for the job, or missing a ground pin?
2. Where are our cords crossing walkways, doorways or traffic, and how can we protect or reroute them?
3. Is every cord on this job plugged into GFCI protection?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1926.405, Wiring methods, components, and equipment for general use
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.405

SOURCES

Extension Cords: 5 Things to Know (OSHA 4495): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA4495.pdf
Electrical Hazards: Controlling Electrical Hazards (OSHA 3075): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3075.pdf
Roll Up! Electrical Safety in Construction (OSHA 4496): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA4496.pdf

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

Extension Cord Safety Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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