

Fire Safety: Selection and Appropriate Use of Power Strips

Power Strips / Multi Outlet Strips

Power strips are also commonly referred to as multi-outlet strips, surge protectors or power bars.

Selection

In accordance with applicable regulations related to fire safety, power strips used on campus must be equipped with the following fire safety features:

1. Have a UL or other nationally recognized testing laboratory certification
2. Have overcurrent or circuit protection (built in circuit breaker)



Important: Not all surge protection strips have overcurrent protection!

Appropriate Use

Multi-outlet strips are designed for use with office equipment, electronic devices, and similar equipment that will *not exceed a capacity of 15 amps* total for all 6 outlets on the strip.

They are unsafe and prohibited for use with heat producing appliances such as toasters, toaster ovens, tea kettles, portable heaters, etc., especially in when used in combination. This use constitutes a significant fire hazard and is usually listed as unsafe by the appliance manufacturer safety instructions.

The multi-outlet strip must lay flat on a surface or be mounted to the side of a desk or wall – it cannot be suspended by its cord or by the cords plugged into it. Due to possible lead and asbestos containing building materials, wall mounting must be performed by Facilities Operations, via a work order request.

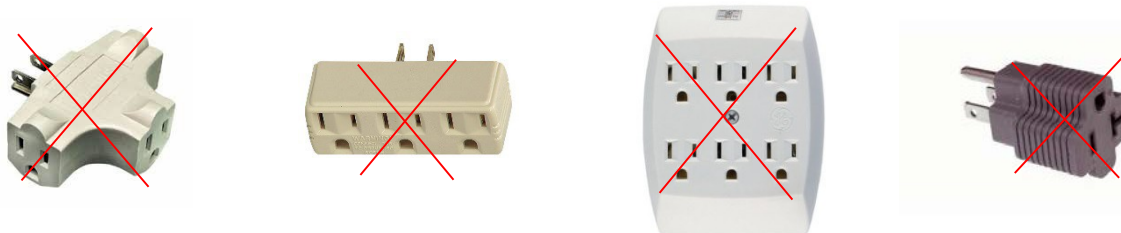
Surge Protection vs Circuit Protection

Surge protection alone does not satisfy the safety requirement as these devices do not protect from circuit overload which can cause a fire at the device or within the building wiring.

Prohibited Use / Fire Hazards

The following use and devices are prohibited from use on campus:

- Daisy chaining: Connecting two or more power strips together or connection of a power strip to an extension cord.
- The use of power taps or multi-outlet devices.
- The use of grounding adapters; this use can result in a shock or fire due to improper grounding.
- Devices without a UL listing such as homemade extension cords or power boxes.
- Use of damaged power strips or equipment; missing, loose, or damaged prongs, etc.



If you have questions regarding power strip use and electrical fire safety, contact Mike Landvogt at mlandvogt@calpoly.edu