



BUILDING AN INFORMED COALITION OF SHENANDOAH COUNTY CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS

Electrical Cord Safety

Just plowing through the junk drawer for an extension cord? This may not be a good idea. Extension cords can be very helpful in delivering power right where we need it. However, regardless of the gauge or rating of the cord, an extension cord is a temporary solution, and is not meant to be used as a long-term extension of your household’s electrical system.

Using extension cords properly is critical to your safety. With continuous use over time, an extension cord can rapidly deteriorate, creating a potentially dangerous electric shock or fire hazard. We offer the following tips for staying safe from electric shock and electrical fires:

- Do not overload extension cords or allow them to run through water or snow on the ground.
- Do not substitute extension cords for permanent wiring.
- Do not run through walls, doorways, ceilings or floors. If cord is covered, heat cannot escape, which may result in a fire hazard.
- Do not use an extension cord for more than one appliance.
- A heavy reliance on extension cords is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed where you need them.
- Multiple plug outlets must be plugged directly into mounted electrical receptacles; they cannot be chained together.
- Make sure the extension cord or temporary power strip you use is rated for the products to be plugged in, and is marked for either indoor or outdoor use.
- The appliance or tool that you are using the cord with will have a wattage rating on it. Match this up with your extension cord, and do not use a cord that has a lower rating.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way. Touching even a single exposed strand can give you an electric shock or burn.
- Never use three-prong plugs with outlets that only have two slots for the plug. Do not cut off the ground pin to force a fit. This defeats the purpose of a three-prong plug and could lead to an electrical shock. Never force a plug into an outlet if it doesn’t fit.
- Use extension cords with polarized and/or three-prong plugs.
- Buy only cords approved by an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), ETL-SEMKO (ETL) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA).

*Data from ESFI

Shenandoah County

Office of Community Development

Building Department Newsletter

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Building Department Mission

The mission of the Building Department is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public by assuring that all buildings, structures and related equipment are constructed, installed and maintained in compliance with the standards contained within the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.

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The holiday season is steeped in traditions that originated in a world long before warning labels and fire safety commercials. They say ‘accidents happen’ but there are steps you can take to enjoy your beloved rituals without risking a home fire or your personal safety. Here are four potentially risky traditions, along with a few holiday safety tips:

Candles and Christmas Light Safety

Flickering candlelight looks beautiful, but real candles should never be used on or near a Christmas tree (the earliest Christmas trees were illuminated by candles). Even Christmas lights can pose a fire safety problem. Frayed wires left unattended can overheat, turning a dry tree into a raging inferno in just seconds. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, home holiday decorations cause over 400 holiday fires each year, resulting in \$15 million in property loss and damage.

Safety tip: Decorating for Christmas shouldn’t be a hazard. Only use electric lights that are rated for Christmas trees and tested by a recognized laboratory (you’ll usually find a sticker noting the laboratory’s approval on the cord), and keep your tree well watered to reduce flammability.

Fried Turkey for Thanksgiving Dinner

Beware the turkey fryer! Crisp, fried turkey may taste delicious, but splattered hot oil can easily start a serious house fire or burn anyone nearby. In addition to the danger of splattering oil igniting flammable objects nearby, the oil itself can overheat and catch fire.

Safety tip: If fried turkey is part of your family’s Thanksgiving tradition, consider these fire safety tips: don’t overfill a fryer with oil (leave enough room to avoid spills when you add the turkey); never put a frozen turkey directly in hot oil; or, use an infrared fryer to safely cook your bird instead.

Roof-Top Holiday Decorations

Crawling onto the roof to string lights or set up Santa’s sleigh sends nearly 5,800 people to the hospital emergency room each year, according to a study by Electrical Safety Foundation International. Accidental falls from the roof or an unstable ladder can result in broken bones, concussions or even something worse.

Safety tip: If possible, avoid climbing onto the roof to set up holiday decor. If you must use a ladder, make sure it is securely positioned, and ask another adult to hold it for you. Children should never climb ladders.

Black Friday Door-Buster Shopping Stampedes

Scoring a door-buster deal on Black Friday is an annual tradition for many American shoppers. Lining up and racing into a store right when it opens, however, can be extremely dangerous. Every year, there are reports of people being trampled by over-eager shoppers.

Stay safe: Many stores are now staggering door-buster deals over several hours. Skip the stampede and arrive later in the day; no shopping savings are worth risking injury.

*Data from Allstate Insurance Blog

Free Code Access

Have you ever wondered what exactly is written in the code books? Now you can view free of charge all of the building codes enforced by the Commonwealth of Virginia by going to the following website:

<http://codes.iccsafe.org/#virginia> or find the link on the Shenandoah County Building Inspections website.



SCCC Membership

Membership in the Shenandoah County Construction Coalition is free. By becoming a member you will be networking with other members of your community that work in the same field as you. Membership allows us a contact list to send information to regarding upcoming events. If you would like to be added to the membership send your information to mryman@shenandoahcountyva.us or call us at 540-459-6185.

Did you know...

That an average of 250 injuries are reported daily during the holiday season?

The use of “fire salts” in your fireplace can make you sick?

Flash fires can occur from burning wrapping paper in your fireplace or woodstove?