Office of Environmental Health and Safety

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Power Strips and Dangerous "Daisy Chains"

According to the NFPA (National Fire Protection Agency), electrical distribution equipment such as extension cords are one of the leading causes of fire-related deaths in the U.S.

Facts:

- ✓ The most common cause of fires from extension cords is improper use and/or overloading, especially when the cords have multiple outlets. Improper use of easily loaded, unapproved extension cords can present a serious fire hazard at home and in the workplace. Only UL (Underwriters Laboratories) approved power strips should be used.

- ✓ Often times the number of available electrical outlets is inadequate in some buildings, especially older ones. To meet power supply needs, extension cords or surge protected powered strips are often interconnected, or "daisy chained," to readily provide more outlets and/or to reach greater distances. Another common practice is a "mixed daisy chain," which is interconnecting extension cords and power strips. However, interconnecting these devices is a violation of National Electric Code regulations.

Why Daisy Chains/Mixed Chains are a Bad Idea:

- ✓ Most power strips are approved for providing power to a maximum of 4 to 6 low energy demand items, however, when multiple power strips are interconnected, the one directly connected to the building outlet is often supplying power to far more than its approved number.

- ✓ Overloaded circuits can result in a fire or can cause a circuit breaker to trip, which cause computers and other equipment throughout the area to become DE energized.