

“Power Strips and Surge Protections”

(Provided by Safety Consultation and Training Section-Nevada Division of Industrial Relations)

What are they?

Power strips and surge protectors came about as a result of the need for additional power outlets to support computers and the hardware associated with those computers (i.e., printer, monitor, modem, scanner, etc.). Having up to six outlets, they were designed specifically to provide power to a large number of low powered hardware items associated with a desk-top computer system (approximately 3 - 5 amps for a typical work station). They typically consist of an On/Off power switch, circuit breaker, flexible cord, and power outlets (surge protectors contain additional electronic components to provide component protection from voltage surges and noise). They are designed to be plugged into branch circuits, not extension cords, or to another surge protector. These devices are specifically evaluated and listed by Underwriter Laboratories Inc. (UL) under separate standards.

What are they not ?

They are not considered by UL to be either extension cords or temporary wiring as extension cords are listed under an entirely different UL standard. They are neither designed for nor listed by UL to supply power to a large number of high-powered loads (i.e., refrigerators, drills, coffee pots, toasters, microwave and toaster ovens, etc.). The UL standard also states that these devices must not be connected to each other in series, or to extension cords; permanently secured to building structures, tables, work benches, carts, etc.; nor used as a substitute for fixed wiring. Power strips and surge protectors are not designed for use at construction sites or other similar locations.

How must they be used?

OSHA standards, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, and National Electric Codes (NEC) all require employers to follow the manufacturer’s instructions packaged with the device. The instructions specify the proper use of the device as listed by UL and permitted by the manufacturer. Only use power strips and surge protectors with the intended equipment, permitted power loads, in the approved locations, and avoid physical damage and exposure to water or wet locations.

