



**WASHINGTON STATE PATROL – FIRE PROTECTION BUREAU
INSPECTION SECTION**

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Power Strips and Electrical Outlets

A common citation in Nursing Homes is misuse of extension cords/power strips, i.e., using them in place of permanent wiring.

Resident rooms in long term care facilities are often not equipped to provide electrical outlets for the multiple electronic devices used by current residents. These devices may include television, DVR, CD player, cell phone charger, lamps, etc. The need for multiple electrical outlets has caused facilities to turn to the use of power strips. Although they have extra safety features such as internal circuit breaker and/or surge protection, power strips cannot be used in place of permanent wiring NFPA 70 400-08(1).

In response to the need for electrical outlets, we offer the following guidelines and alternatives.

1. Move desks and appliances closer to an outlet.
2. Unplug items seldom used, such as a lamp used for decoration or CD players.
3. Install a wall-mounted multi plug adapter that plugs directly into the wall outlet and has over current protection with a reset button.
4. Install a multi-plug adapter that plugs directly into the wall, screws securely into the outlet and is protected from over-current by an internal fuse that must be replaced if exposed to over-current.
5. Have more outlets installed.

Waiver Request

When these steps are inadequate to provide needed electrical outlets, another option is to request a continuing waiver for this code citation.

A temporary or continuing waiver for a defined time period may be considered for a deficiency for which corrective action will take more than 35 days to complete. The request for a waiver itself will not delay imposition of enforcement actions. If a waiver is granted during that time, federal sanctions will not be imposed.

The waiver request must include: (1) the citation in question, (2) a plan to correct and (3) a safety plan. The plan to correct must show financial hardship and that it does not pose a threat to health and safety.

1. The citation in question.

State the citation in question: K147 Flexible cords and cables shall not be used as a substitute for the fixed wiring of a structure.

2. A plan to correct the problem.

- A bid from an electrical contractor showing costs to perform repairs. (Financial hardship)
- A letter from a licensed electrical contractor that expressly states: The building's electrical system is able to safely carry the load with the addition of power strips to existing resident rooms. (It does not pose a threat to health and safety.)

3. A safety plan to protect residents and staff while the waiver is in effect.

Monitor power strip use, including inspecting them:

Power strips must have the following features:

- UL Listed
- Over current protection, with reset. 15 amps maximum
- A 14 gage cord
- Shall have a polarized plug or a three-prong grounded plug

Power strips may be used for:

- TV, TV receivers and related electronics
- Computers and accessories
- Clock radios
- Electronic chargers
- Desk lamps

Power strips shall not be used for:

- Refrigerators
- Microwaves
- Floor cleaning machines
- Portable heaters

Housekeeping will visually inspect power strips and will report to maintenance any damage or signs of degradation. Power strips no longer in use will be removed from the room.

- Power strips that are not working properly or have frayed wires will be replaced immediately.
- Power strips shall be located as not to incur damage, and are not to be covered by carpet or furniture.
- Power strips shall not be stapled, tacked or taped.
- Power strips shall not be exposed to a moist environment.
- A power strip may not be plugged into another power strip.

For more information or further assistance, contact Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal, Karen Jones, at (360)596-3906 or email Karen.jones@wsp.wa.gov.

Find these valuable resources on our website:

Resources for Licensed Care Facilities - http://www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/insp_resources.htm.

- Electrical Safety PowerPoint Slide Show

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