Spot The Safety Violation: Don’t Fall for This!

Does the placement and use of this extension cord seem particularly safe’ What’s wrong with it’

Slip, trip and fall hazards are present in many workplaces. Some of these hazards are created by conditions, such as a wet floor or icy walkway. Others can be created by the tools, materials and equipment used in the workplace. For example, extension cords that aren’t placed or used correctly can get caught under workers’ feet and cause them to fall.

This picture from the Fort Hood Press Center in Texas shows an extension cord lying on the floor across a hallway, which poses a trip-and-fall hazard. It doesn’t help that the cord isn’t lying flat’the raised loops could easily catch a worker’s foot and make him fall.

Extension and others cords strewn across the workplace can also create obstacles for equipment’and result in safety incidents.

For example, at an Ontario construction site, two temporary workers were assigned to move a cart loaded with sheets of 18-gauge steel weighing about 2,050 pounds in total. The load wasn’t secured to the cart. As they were moving the cart, it was obstructed by an extension cord on the floor. A third worker came to help them move the cart over the cord. As they

did so, the steel sheets fell onto the temporary workers. Both suffered broken bones.

To make matters worse, two weeks before this incident, an MOL inspector had ordered the construction company to implement a plan to manage the electrical cords on the site'many cords were on the floor, constituting a tripping hazard. The company pleaded guilty to a safety violation and was fined $50,000 [*Elite Construction Inc.*, Govt. News Release, Oct. 6, 2015].

PREVENTING TRIPS

According to a bulletin from WorkSafeBC, tripping hazards include damaged or worn carpets, rugs and mats; uneven flooring; cluttered walkways; uncovered cables; poor lighting; and obstructed views.

Basic housekeeping and maintenance measures can address most, if not all, of these hazards. Tripping hazards should be addressed and eliminated immediately by:

- Removing any clutter or obstacles as soon as they're identified in pathways and aisles.
- Cleaning up debris promptly.
- Making sure that all tools, equipment and materials are put away properly and promptly, and keeping tools away from walkways and access points.
- Running electrical wires and cords'including extension cords'where they won't create tripping hazards.
- Repairing damaged flooring or replacing it with non-slip tiling or other non-slip floor products.

Use this checklist to identify slip, trip and fall hazards in your workplace. Make sure you take appropriate steps to address and hazards that you *do* identify.

Things that *workers* can do to avoid tripping include:

- Immediately clean up spills, and clear away any

obstacles or clutter.

- Alert others to the hazard, such as by putting up warning signs.
- Wear well-fitting, non-slip footwear that’s right for the job. Make sure the tread is in good condition and the shoelaces are tied correctly.
- Don’t carry or move more than you can safely handle.
- Make sure you can see where you’re going when carrying large items.
- Avoid distractions such as using a cellphone while walking.
- Pay attention to signage and watch out for hazards on walkways.
- Avoid taking shortcuts instead of using designated pathways.
- Walk ‘ don’t run.
- Use handrails on stairs.
- Slow down and be cautious when walking on uneven surfaces, through cluttered areas or on wet floors.

14 EXTENSION CORD DON’TS

And according to the Texas Department of Insurance Division of Workers’ Compensation, to safely use extension cords, workers should NOT:

1. Use an extension cord marked for indoor use outdoors.
2. Plug one extension cord into another.
3. Overload cords with more than the proper electrical load.
4. Run extension cords through doorways or holes in ceilings, walls or floors.
5. Move, bend or modify any of the metal parts of the extension cord plug.
6. Plug a three-prong into a two-hole extension cord.
7. Force a plug into an outlet.

8. Use an extension cord when it’s wet.
9. Overheat an extension cord.
10. Cover an extension cord with anything.
11. Drive over, stand or place anything on top of an extension cord.
12. Drag an extension cord.
13. Attach extension cords to the wall with nails or staples.
14. Run extension cords under rugs or carpets, or in high traffic areas’such as hallways like the one in this picture.