

Safe Use of Relocatable Power Taps



Relocatable power taps, commonly known as power strips, are often used where many electrical devices are operated in close proximity, such as computer systems and audio / visual equipment. The National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) provide guidance for the safe use of relocatable power taps. Specific relevant codes include NFPA 1 Uniform Fire Code and UL-1363 Standard for Safety Relocatable Power Taps.

Here are some safety tips from these organizations for relocatable power tap users;

- Look for a certification label from an independent testing lab such as UL or ETL (Electrical Testing Laboratories) on the package and on the product itself. Products with this certification label meet current industry safety standards. Inspect the underside of the product casing and make certain that it is marked with the manufacturer's name and the testing lab.
- Relocatable power taps may ONLY be plugged in to an "approved receptacle" (i.e., wall outlet). Relocatable power taps may NOT be plugged into one-another or into an extension cord.
- Use relocatable power taps that have polarized plugs with one blade slightly wider than the other, or grounded three-pronged plugs. These features reduce the risk of electric shock.
- Use relocatable power taps with overcurrent protection in the form of a resettable circuit breaker.
- Insert plugs fully so that no part of the prongs are exposed.
- If a relocatable power tap or attached cord feels hot to the touch, stop using it and throw it away.
- Relocatable power tap cords may not extend through walls, ceilings, or floors; under doors or floor coverings; or be subject to environmental or physical damage. Replace relocatable power taps with cracked or worn cords.
- Extension cords may be plugged into relocatable power taps, but only for temporary applications. Temporary is typically defined as less than 90 days.
- Electrical overloading can be a problem if appliances with heating elements, such as portable electric heaters, toasters, or coffee pots, are plugged into a relocatable power tap. Appliances with heating elements must be plugged directly into a wall outlet.

If you have any questions about the safe use of relocatable power taps, please contact the Environment, Health and Safety Program