

## A Safety Note from Your Cooperative



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# A “Smart” Extension Cord



Our technology continues to get better and better and we have so many ways we can “ask” a question to a device and we get a response. Such devices on the market today include Siri with your phone or Alexa with the Echo. So, what if they made a “smart” extension cord? Could it help keep us safe from an electrical shock or fire? Let’s find out.

Today is the day to decorate your home for the holidays. The first thing you do is head to the garage and gather all the cords you used last year. As you pick through the pile, you find one and plug it in. Then you hear . . .

**Wait – did you inspect me?** Each time you go to use a cord, inspect it. Look for cuts, splices or exposed wires. Then, make sure it has the ground plug still in place. If not, repair or discard.

As you go about stringing the lights around, you know need to plug them into the outlet. But, you have a lot of cords and so you grab a couple of power strips and this is what it eventually looks like [see picture]. As you plug it all in, you hear . . .

**Help – I’m claustrophobic and I don’t like being with all of these other cords.** Don’t overload a circuit with too many cords. It is best to use one device and not to “daisy-chain” your power strips together.



So, you do some reconfiguring but you don’t like how that string of lights looks as it goes from the coffee table to the wall. Hey, why not cover it up with a rug? As you throw the rug over the cord you hear . . .

**Help, I can’t breathe when you cover me up.** Never cover your extension cord with heavy furniture or rugs. Heavy weights or traffic can damage cords, crushing insulation or breaking wire strands.

Well, it is starting to look like the holidays around your house and you want to make sure you have a nice display when people enter your home. As you finish decorating your entryway, you head outdoors to make sure your house is all bright and merry, too. You grab some more extension cords and then hear . . .

**Don’t take me outside – grab the other one!** Cords are designed for different environments. Don’t use a cord meant for inside use in an outdoor environment. Cords made for indoor use will not withstand the temperature, humidity, and mechanical stresses of outdoor use. The label (UL, CSA, ETL, etc.) of the cord confirms the cord meets the requirement (electrical capacity) for the job, total amp demand, rated for design use and environment being used (wet, outdoor).

You step back and marvel at your lighting and then head into the house to grab the family to come and look at it. As you walk through your entryway, you suddenly fall and then you hear . . .

**Got you – that was a good fall!** Your icy sidewalk isn’t the only slip-trip hazard this time of year. We string our extension cords all over the place and sometimes even where we walk. Cords placed in the path of traffic are tripping hazards. Cords can be damaged when stepped on, creating a fire or shock hazard.