

HCFA PROGRAM ISSUANCE
TRANSMITTAL NOTICE
REGION IV

DATE: March 30, 1999

PROGRAM IDENTIFIER:

Division of Medicaid and State Operations
Survey and Certification
All States Letter Number: 22-99

SUBJECT: Life Safety Code: Extension Cords and Power Strips

A number of questions have been raised about the use of extension cords and multi-outlet extensions (power strips) in health care occupancies. Sections 12-5.1, 13-5.1, and 7-1.2 of the 1985 edition of NFPA 101 require health care occupancies to comply with the 1984 edition of NFPA 70, the National Electrical Code. The 1984 edition of the National Electric Code restricts the use of extension cords to temporary short term uses. It is the policy of HCFA to prohibit non-circuit breaker protected extension cords in health care. The limited use of circuit breaker protected power strips is acceptable, provided the current is limited to 15 amps or less, and no major appliances such as air conditioners, refrigerators, or heating units are connected to the power strip.

Caution: Widespread use of power strips may indicate the need for additional wiring. A written evaluation of the buildings electrical system by a certified electrician can be required when there is widespread use of power strips. If you have questions, please contact your Program Representative.

/s/

Eugene A. Grasser
Associate Regional Administrator
Division of Medicaid and State Operations