

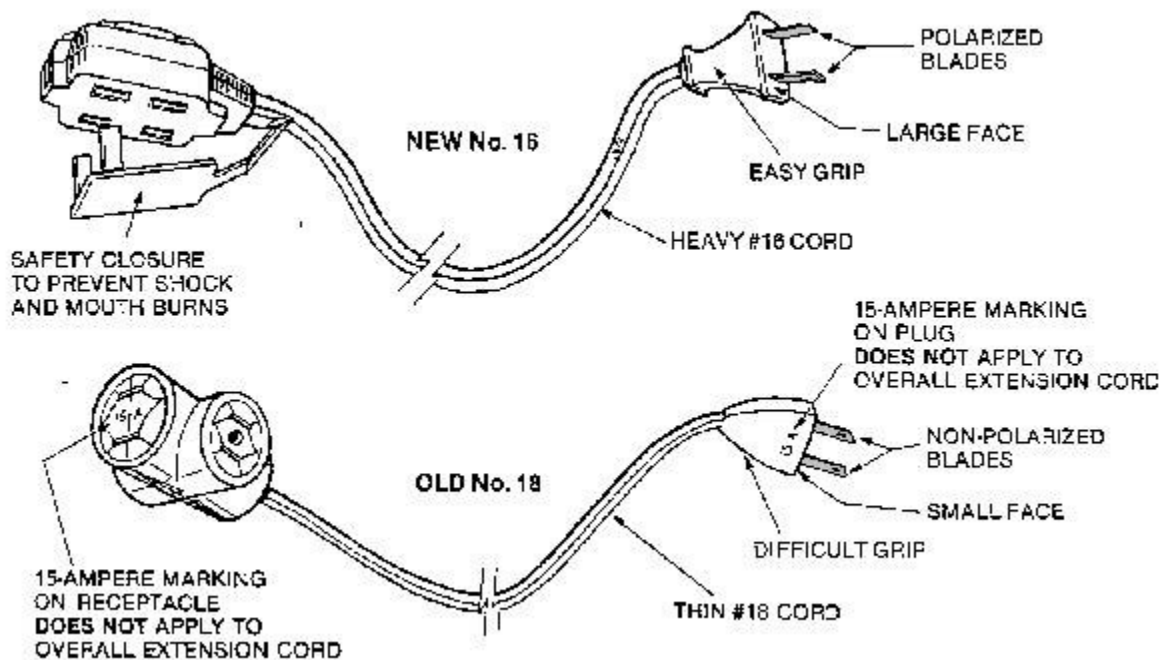
## Consumer Product Safety Commission

### Household Extension Cords Can Cause Fires

CPSC Document #5032

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that about 4,700 residential fires originate in extension cords each year, killing 50 persons and injuring some 280 others.

Overheating of extension cords can occur at the plug, at the socket, or over the entire length of the cord. Hot plugs and sockets are often caused by deteriorated connections to the cord wires.



Overheating of the entire cord is usually caused by overloading (connecting appliances that need too many watts for the wire size of the cord). Many older extension cords made with small (No. 18 gauge) wire that can overheat at 15 or 20 amps are in use.

Consumers should feel the temperature of the cords when they are in use. If they are hot to the touch, disconnect the

heavier gauge wire (the lower the gauge number, the heavier the wire and the more electrical current the cord can safely carry).

The difference between the cord sizes is not obvious, but the new No. 16 cords usually have 16 1 2 or 16 / 3 stamped on the cord and will have the wire size printed on the package.

Check new cords to make sure they are

appliances).

listed by a recognized national testing laboratory.

If there is any sign of overheating, replace the extension cords with new ones having No. 16 or

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The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. Deaths, injuries and property damage from consumer product incidents cost the nation more than \$700 billion annually. The CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard or can injure children. The CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products - such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters, and household chemicals - contributed significantly to the 30 percent decline in the rate of deaths and injuries associated with consumer products over the past 30 years.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's web site at [www.cpsc.gov/talk.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/talk.html). To join a CPSC email subscription list, please go to [www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp). Consumers can obtain this release and recall information at CPSC's Web site at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

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