

Back to school safety tips for University and College students

Each fall, many students will attend University or College in Ontario. For many, this life-changing experience means moving away. When renting off-campus accommodations, the Electrical Safety Authority encourages students and parents to identify and request correction for any of the following potentially unsafe electrical situations before moving:

- Loose or damaged plugs and switches
- Outlets and switches with missing cover plates
- Outlets and switches that are warm or hot to the touch
- Dim or flickering lights
- Exposed electrical wiring
- Fuses that blow, circuit breakers that frequently trip, or circuits that don't work when fuses are replaced or breakers reset
- Renovated bathrooms and kitchens without Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI)-protected outlets
- 2-prong receptacles that are not suitable for many used 3-pronged cords

When any of the above situations are identified, the Landlord should be notified so that the appropriate actions can be taken and repairs can be performed by a Licensed Electrical Contractor (LEC).

Even when accommodations are safeguarded, students still need to be vigilant about their own property, like power cords, electronics and appliances. Protect yourself from injury and keep electronics running safely by taking a few simple precautions:

- Use only approved electrical products with the mark of a recognized certification agency; a listing can be found at <https://esasafe.com/electrical-products/recognized-certification-marks/>
- Choose power bars with a heavy-gauge cord that are approved by a recognized certification agency.
- Replace damaged or deteriorated extension cords with new ones.
- Keep extension cords out from under carpet, rugs or furniture as this could damage the cord and also present a fire hazard.
- Never remove the 3rd prong from an electrical product – the 3rd prong is there for grounding purposes and is a critical safety feature.

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- Never use “cheater” plugs – these are used to plug a 3-pronged device into a 2-pronged outlet and overrides critical safety mechanisms
- Avoid overloading outlets or circuits – this can cause overheating which poses a potential fire hazard
- GFCIs should be tested monthly to ensure they are in proper operating condition
- Consider purchasing a portable GFCI for use in areas where GFCIs are not present.

Visit www.esasafe.com for more electrical safety information.