Use extension cords only when necessary. It is best to plug an electrical device directly into the wall outlet if you can. That is not always possible. Outlets often are not in the locations where they are needed. To resolve this problem you will need an extension cord—you will also need the correct type of cord. Using the wrong kind of cord, or using it incorrectly can create safety hazards such as fire, shock, electrocution, trips and falls, and blown fuses.

**Shopping For an Extension Cord**

Almost all extension cords are labeled with much information. This information will help you to choose the correct cord for the intended use.

Read the label and instructions carefully to know which extension cord fit your needs. Look for:

- **Total watts the cord will carry.**
- **Volts of current the cord will carry.** Most electrical uses require 110-120 volts. Some heavy-duty equipment such as an electric stove or clothes dryer, require 220 volts. You cannot use a 120-volt cord or equipment on a 220 line. It will burn out the cord and equipment.
- **Gauge of wire:** The size of wire indicates the amount of electrical current—watts—that can be safely carried by the wire.
- **Also look for the UL Seal of Approval, which means the extension cord meets certain safety standards.**

Table 1 shows the relationship of wire size (gauge) to the amount of current that it will safely carry.

Other Considerations:

- **If the plug has two prongs it is intended to fit into an outlet of the same pattern.**
- **Does the cord accept grounded plugs, that is plugs with three prongs?** (In case you decide to use an extension cord that has only two openings for prongs with an appliance that has a three-prong plug, **NEVER** remove the third prong. Purchase an adapter to use with the cord and appliance).
- **Some inexpensive, lightweight cords have very shallow receptacles so the plug-in will not fit snugly. If a gap is left this could create a safety problem.**
• Where is the cord to be used, indoors or out-of-doors? Out-of-doors must be much better insulated against moisture and the elements. **NEVER use indoor cords out-of-doors.**

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cord Type</th>
<th>Guage</th>
<th>Amps</th>
<th>Total Amps</th>
<th>Volts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lightweight cord (lamp, radio)</td>
<td>18 gauge</td>
<td>7 AMPS</td>
<td>875 total watts</td>
<td>125 volts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium use cord (small electrical equipment)</td>
<td>16 gauge</td>
<td>13 AMPS</td>
<td>1625 total watts</td>
<td>125 volts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy duty cord (computer, printer, refrigerator)</td>
<td>14 gauge</td>
<td>15 AMPS</td>
<td>1825 total watts</td>
<td>125 volts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy duty cord (air conditioner, clothes dryer, range top, oven)</td>
<td>12 gauge</td>
<td>20 AMPS</td>
<td>5000 watts</td>
<td>220 volts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Safety Concerns**

• Never run or place an extension cord under a rug. Under a rug the extension cord can cause a fire under certain conditions.

• Before using an old cord inspect it carefully for broken places or worn insulation. Old extension cords have caused many fires and given many shocks.

• **NEVER remove a cord from the outlet by pulling on the cord.**