

# Small Appliances

Guide

Facilities  
Office of Risk Management  
Protection Services

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This Document was developed in cooperation with Facilities,  
Protection Services and the Office of Risk Management.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document is intended to provide guidance to the University Community on the position of small, electrical appliances. It is intended to help ensure the safety of the University Community as well as uOttawa infrastructure. It is recognized by uOttawa that small appliances are often required for laboratory, instructional or teaching purposes. This document is intended to address office-type workplace; however, is not limited in its scope.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Small appliances – means a class of appliances which, by their size and function are portable or semi-portable machines which are generally used on tabletops, countertops, or other platforms for the purposes of thermal comfort, the preparation of food / drink, etc. Small appliances referenced in this document are generally electrical in nature.

Designated Area – an area on campus that has been designated for the use of small appliances. Examples of a designated area may include a cafeteria, a designated employee or student lounge, kitchens, etc. This guideline is not intended to address equipment for laboratory-use purposes. The Facility Manager(s) of the respective Faculty of Service, in conjunction with Facilities, are responsible for establishing designated areas.

Improvised Kitchen – an area on campus that has been created by occupants or users of the area for the purposes of preparing food / drink.

## **RESTRICTIONS**

The use of small appliances within personal or shared offices is not permitted.

The University of Ottawa recognizes that kitchen-type areas are required in buildings in order to support personnel working and studying in these spaces. As buildings and existing infrastructure are built and redeveloped, the needs of the University Community are considered with the construction of suitable kitchen-type areas furnished for the requisite purposes.

For example, communal kitchens are available on most floors in Desmarais and the FSS building. Communal microwaves are available at the University Centre Cafeteria, the SITE cafeteria, Café L'Alibi (Fauteux), etc. Faculty and Service specific kitchens are available across campus in most buildings. The use of small appliances is to be confined to designated areas.

The use of combustion devices (for example, portable gas stoves, BBQs, gas heaters, etc.) inside a building is prohibited.

## EXAMPLES OF SMALL APPLIANCES

### Personal Heaters

Personal heaters are generally used by individuals for added thermal comfort within their office. A reasonable interior temperature during winter months is (humidity dependent) between 20 °C and 24 °C<sup>1</sup>. Personal heaters are not recommended as a substitute for the general ventilation and HVAC systems of the building. If a widespread thermal issue exists, the issue is to be reported to Facilities (via the Facility Manager) at ext. 2222 to correct the issue. Nonetheless, it is understood that each individual may perceive thermal comfort in varying degrees. If a personal heater is deemed necessary for comfort purposes, please contact your Facility Manager. Facilities will provide an approved model, which is both efficient and safe.

Unapproved personal heaters may not be equipped with the proper safety features; therefore, producing added hazards. A number of serious hazards are associated with portable heaters, including:

- Fire / explosion;
- Carbon monoxide poisoning (primarily fuel powered);
- Electrocution and overloading circuits; and
- Burns.

These hazards can manifest themselves as a result of heaters being used in poor condition, using heaters for unintended purposes, or using a heater in the incorrect location. Additionally, the electricity required to power certain types of portable heaters is extensive, which can lead to operational electrical problems, including tripped breakers (potentially affecting several individuals) and added service calls.

Some general guidelines for the use of portable heaters include:

- Inspecting heaters for signs of damage and wear (wiring, casing, heating element, etc.)
- Placing heaters away from combustible materials (paper, cardboard, curtains / textiles, etc.)
- Using independent electrical outlets to avoid overloading breakers, extension cords and power bars.
- Turning off / unplugging a heater while unattended (for example, leaving at night).

### Kitchen Equipment

Fridges, microwaves, toasters (including toaster ovens), hot plates, kettles, coffee machines (including personal coffee makers), sandwich presses, grills, griddles, etc. are all examples of kitchen equipment. These devices are used in the preparation of food / drink materials and can all use significant amounts of electricity. Additionally, these devices are typically designed for use in a household setting and not in a workplace.

Existing kitchens, lounges and common spaces are available for the use of employees and students. These locations are designed and constructed for this explicit purpose whereas offices are intended for low-consumption devices (such as computers, monitors, etc.) and often feature electrical receptacles for the expected use of the workspace.

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1– CSA Z412-00; available from the Office of Risk Management upon request.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR SMALL APPLIANCES

Where permitted to be used, all small appliances shall meet basic operational safety requirements. The small appliance(s) must:

- Be CSA (or equivalent) approved;
- Be equipped with grounded plugs and not tampered with in any fashion;
- Be in good working condition;
- Be originally corded; which cannot be frayed, taped, damaged or otherwise altered in any fashion;
- Employ current safety features (where possible), such as automatic shut-off mechanisms;
- Be used in a designated area;
- Be used without overloading the electrical circuits in the area;
- Be operated in accordance with manufacturer's intended operation while following manufacturer operational instructions;
- Not be left unattended (if heat generating);
- Not be used with extension cords;
- Be unplugged or powered-down when not in use.

Small appliances failing to meet these standards are not permitted for use in designated areas at uOttawa.

All small appliances are to be conspicuously labelled or otherwise identified with the Faculty / Service / Department and/or owner's name.

## POWER BARS AND EXTENSION CORDS

Not all power bars and extension cords are created equal. There are varying requirements; some general use requirements are listed below.

### Power Bars

- Surge protected power bars are recommended to protect equipment from any surge in power. Examples of surge protected power bars include the uOttawa standard.
- Ensure power bars are not overloaded. Power bars are intended for low voltage equipment such as computers, desk lamp, etc.
- Do not connect multiple power bars to a single plug, or connect multiple power bars together in a series.
- Inspect the extension cord for signs of physical damage. If its condition is in doubt, remove it from service.

### Extension Cords

- Extension cords are intended to be a **temporary, short-term** solution where power is required. Temporary extension cords are still required to be protected / secured to reduce tripping hazards.
- Extension cords are rated for capacity; ensure you've selected an extension cord appropriate for the device requiring power.
- Do not connect multiple extension cords together in a series.

- Inspect the extension cord for signs of physical damage. If its condition is in doubt, remove it from service.

## **TRIPPING HAZARDS**

Additional wiring and cords can also create physical hazards in the workplace. For example, cabling running underneath workstations may cause an individual's foot to become entangled, which can lead to a trip and fall. Similarly, unsecured cables strewn across floors can also lead to trips and falls.

Slips, trips and falls account for the largest type of workplace accident at uOttawa<sup>2</sup>; therefore, if cords can be minimized (or otherwise properly secured), a number of these types of incidents can be minimized and even entirely prevented from occurring.

## **ELECTRICAL DEMANDS**

### **Electrical Outlets / Plugs**

The number of electrical outlets (or plugs) is taken into consideration in the design and concept stage of a project (either capital or operational). The intended use of the space is the primary determining factor in the number of outlets / plugs. With the recent advancement as an electronically dependent society, the University is adapting common spaces, classrooms and conference rooms for employee and student use by installing additional power outlets for laptops, tablets, phone chargers, etc. Nevertheless, offices have primarily remained unchanged for several years with a computer and its associated devices – predominantly, a computer monitor.

Remember, that added outlets generally require additional wiring and a suitable power source in order to function properly and safely.

It is noteworthy to mention that many household appliances (including most large appliances) require a dedicated circuit in order to function properly and safely.

### **Breakers**

A circuit breaker is a switch designed to protect a circuit from damage caused by electrical overload or electrical short circuit. A breaker serves to detect a fault and interrupt current flow – thus protecting the system and, subsequently, the users. Circuit breakers are available in a variety of sizes; however their purpose remains the same. Your residence will have circuit breakers for the electrical systems; these are typically found in the electrical panel (for example, in a residential basement). When tripped, the breaker needs to be reset in order to restore operations. In some cases, additional electrical work is required prior to the restoration of normal operations.

Once a breaker is tripped, the electrical devices on that circuit cannot be used, as there is no electricity provided to that circuit. If a breaker is frequently tripping, it is indicative of a problem; which could be related to operations or the electrical system itself.

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<sup>2</sup> Source – Annual Workplace Accident Statistics (2015) – Office of Risk Management

### **Resetting Breakers**

If no power exists, contact your Facility Manager. If the Facility Manager is not available, contact Facilities at ext. 2222 to report the outage. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RESET THE BREAKER.** Facilities will dispatch an electrician to investigate and address the electrical problem.

### **Added Service Calls**

Increased service calls can have significant impact on the operational team at Facilities; both in terms of time and resources. If the number of maintenance calls for tripped breakers as a result of overloaded circuits can be reduced, the Electrical Department can pursue its other operational requirements.

## **FIRE SAFETY**

Overheating small appliances not only can lead to equipment damage, but also to fires and, potentially, explosions. These situations, while rare, can and have occurred when small appliances are misused or overloaded. In order to minimize these types of events, it is recommended to follow these simple guidelines for the use of small appliances when in designated areas.

- Do not leave any appliance unattended, when in use
- Never put metal, such as cutlery / utensils or aluminum foil in a microwave
- Verify the display clock on a microwave or toaster oven before pressing the start button; extended cooking times and inattention often leads to undesirable outcomes and, potentially, building evacuations due to fire.
- Prep and cooking areas should be clear of any objects or surfaces that may be flammable or may melt
- Clean and regularly maintain appliances, both for operational and hygienic purposes.

## **UNAPPROVED USE**

Any contravention of this guideline will be reported to the offending party's Facility Manager and/or Dean / Director. The Facility Manager and/or Dean / Director of the Faculty / Service will be responsible for addressing the matter with the individual(s). Additional action may be taken by the University, as may be appropriate in the circumstances.

The University of Ottawa reserves the right to inspect any appliance for health and safety purposes. If the device is found to pose a hazard for any reason (for example, the age of the small appliance, its condition, electrical implications, etc.), the University will request that the device be immediately removed. The University representative will report the matter to the Facility Manager, who will be requested to address the matter.

## QUESTIONS

Any questions regarding this document may first be directed to your supervisor. Subsequent clarification may be requested from Facility Managers and:

- Facilities Services – Call Centre (ext. 2222)
- Protection Services – Fire Prevention Coordinator (ext. 6091).
- Office of Risk Management (ext. 5892).

Approved by:

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