Risk Management Monthly Newsletter — November 2026

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Environmental Health & Safety

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1.Electrical Safety: Small Devices, Big Risks

A significant number of inspection findings involved improper use of electrical equipment, including daisy-chained power strips, extension cords used as permanent wiring, appliances connected to relocatable power taps (RPTs), missing electrical covers, and damaged outlets.

Common Problems Observed

- Space heaters, microwaves, kettles, and mini-refrigerators plugged into power strips instead of wall outlets.
- Daisy-chained power strips and extension cords.
- Damaged electrical outlets and missing panel covers.
- Unprotected cords creating trip and damage hazards.
- Non-listed and aging power strips in use

Safe Practices

- Plug high-energy appliances directly into wall outlets.
- Never connect one power strip to another.
- Replace damaged electrical equipment immediately.
- Secure cords to prevent tripping and physical damage.
- Use only UL or ETL-listed electrical products.

Did You Know?

Most campus electrical fires begin with overloaded circuits, damaged cords, or improper use of extension devices. A few minutes spent correcting these issues can prevent serious property damage and injury.

2.Water Damage, Ceiling Tiles, and Building Integrity

The most frequent inspection deficiency involved water-damaged, missing, displaced, or deteriorated ceiling tiles throughout the building. Several locations presented a risk of tiles failing and falling onto occupants or equipment.

Why This Matters

- Affect smoke detector performance
- Conceal active roof or plumbing leaks
- Create falling-object hazards
- Allow smoke and fire to spread more rapidly

What Employees Should Do

- Report water stains immediately
- Notify Facilities or Physical Plant if ceiling tiles become loose, displaced, or missing
- Avoid storing items near leak locations
- Never remove ceiling tiles without authorization

Remember

A water stain today may become a major leak tomorrow. Early reporting helps prevent costly repair and safety hazards.

3. Fire Doors Save Lives

Inspectors are finding multiple instances of fire doors held open with wedges, chocks, and other unauthorized devices. Additional concerns included doors not closing properly and illegible fire door labels.

Why Fire Doors Matter

Fire doors are designed to:

- Limit smoke migration
- Slow fire spread
- Protect evacuation routes
- Provide additional time for occupants to exit safely

Safety Reminders

- Never wedge or prop open a fire door
- Remove door chocks immediately
- Report doors that fail to close and latch
- Notify Facilities or Physical Plant if labels are missing or damaged

Ask Yourself

Would this door protect occupants during a fire event? If the answer is uncertain, report the condition.

Storage and Housekeeping Matter

Several inspection findings involved storage practices that interfered with safety systems or obstructed access to emergency equipment. Issues included excessive storage near ceilings, obstructions of electrical panels, improper ladder storage, and combustible materials stored in mechanical rooms.

Best Practices

- Maintain required clearance around electrical panels
- Store materials at least 24 inches below ceiling in non-sprinkled areas
- Keep ladders secured on approved racks

- Avoid storing materials in mechanical and electrical rooms
- Keep exit routes and access paths clear at all times

Safety Corner
A cluttered space is a hidden hazard.

Poor housekeeping contributes to:
- Delayed emergency response
- Increased fire loading
- Blocked evacuations routes
- Increased slip, trip, and fall incidents

Good housekeeping remains on of the simplest and most effective risk reduction strategies available.

Hazard Communication: Know Before You Use

Inspectors identified missing Safety Data Sheets (SDS) information and deficiencies in Hazard Communication program implementation.

Every Employee Should Know
- Where SDS information is located
- Who to contact regarding chemical hazards
- How to identify chemical container labels
- Emergency response procedures for spill or exposure.

If You Use Chemicals
Before Using any chemical product:
- Read the label
- Review the SDS
- Wear appropriate PPE
- Know emergency procedures

Remember
If you cannot find the SDS, stop and ask before using the product

Quick Safety Checklist for November
- ✓ Keep fire doors closed and unobstructed
- ✓ Plug appliances directly into wall outlets
- ✓ Report water-damaged ceiling tiles
- ✓ Maintain clear access to fire extinguishers and alarm pull stations
- ✓ Keep storage organized and below ceiling clearance requirements
- ✓ Verify SDS information is available where chemicals are used
- ✓ Keep exits and evacuations routes free from obstacles

Safety Message of the Month

Most of the hazards identified during safety inspections can be corrected through awareness, good housekeeping, and prompt reporting. If you see something unsafe, report it immediately. Safety is everyone's responsibility.