

Small Appliances

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SAFE WORK GUIDELINE: SMALL APPLIANCES

Small appliances are portable or semi-portable machines which are generally used on tabletops, countertops, or other platforms to accomplish a household task. Examples include:

- Small kitchen appliances such as coffee makers, microwaves, toasters, and kettles
- Personal electrical equipment such as hair dryers, shavers, cooling fans, and humidifiers
- Small appliances used for teaching purposes such as sewing machines and irons

Personal space heaters are not addressed in this document – see Portable Space Heater Safe Work Guideline.

When small electrical appliances overheat, it can lead to equipment damage, fires and, potentially, explosions. Although rare, these situations have occurred when small appliances are misused, left unattended, or overloaded. To avoid these types of events, follow the safe work guidelines outlined below.

SAFE WORK GUIDELINES

All small appliances on campus must:

- Be CSA (Canadian Standards Association) or UL (Underwriters Laboratory) approved
- Be equipped with grounding plugs
- Be in good working condition with original cords that have not been frayed, taped, damaged, or otherwise altered
- Employ current safety features, such as automatic shut-off mechanisms
- Be used in a suitable location (e.g. on a stable surface)
- Be unplugged or shut down when not in use
- Be operated in accordance with manufacturer's directions
- Only be used with CSA/UL approved extension cords or power bars if the cord/bar is rated high enough to handle the electrical load (see Electrical Safety, below)
- Be used with the shortest extension cord possible, if one is required

All small appliances on campus must NOT:

- Be placed near flammable materials (e.g. paper, fabric)
- Overload electrical circuits in the area



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Prior to use, ensure that equipment is in good working condition. If there are signs of damage (e.g. frayed or damaged cords, cracked glass), tag the equipment as “out of service” and bring or report to your supervisor for repair or replacement.

Do not leave heat-generating appliances unattended (e.g. toasters, toaster ovens, and microwaves).

Clean and regularly maintain appliances as per manufacturer’s recommendations, both for operational and hygiene purposes. Pest problems occurring due to improperly cleaned or managed food waste will be addressed by Facilities Management at the expense of the responsible department.

Do not put metal such as cutlery or aluminum foil in microwave ovens.

Be considerate of others and take steps to minimize cooking odours; the HVAC system cannot be adjusted to manage them.

Always verify the cooking time on a microwave or toaster oven before pressing the start button – extended cooking times and inattention can lead to fire.

In the event of a fire in a toaster oven or microwave, do NOT open the door – this will add oxygen to the fire and potentially increase the flames. Leave the door closed and unplug the appliance if it is safe to do so.

If you are trained in the use of a fire extinguisher, use it to extinguish small appliance fires as per your training. Online Portable Fire Extinguisher Training is available through the Environmental Health and Safety course on Blackboard. If there is a chance the fire could spread, leave the area and call 9-1-1. Contact Security to report the incident when it is safe to do so.

Costs incurred from fire system activations triggered by small appliances may be charged back to the employee’s department.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Small appliances should be plugged directly into the wall whenever possible.

Follow the manufacturer’s instructions – they will state whether an appliance can be used with an extension cord and what limitations apply. When permitted to be used, the marked rating of the extension cord must be equal to or greater than the electrical rating of the appliance and the cord should be as short as possible.

When using a power bar to accommodate a number of small appliances, the power bar must be plugged directly into the wall outlet. The bar must be CSA- or UL-approved and capable of handling the total electricity draw.

A standard power outlet can handle 15 amps total; trying to pull more than 15 amps from a single outlet can result in fire or blown fuses. The table below shows some typical amperage for common small appliances; refer to the manufacturer’s specifications to obtain accurate amperage for your appliance make and model. To determine your total draw on the power outlet, add the amperage of all appliances plugged into the wall outlet (directly, via extension cord, or through a power bar). If you have any questions, please contact EH&S at ehs@mtroyal.ca.

TABLE: COMMON SMALL APPLIANCE AMPERAGE

Appliance	Amperage	Appliance	Amperage
Microwave	8 to 10	Computer Monitor	< 1
Coffee Maker	6 to 9	Mobile Phone Charger	< 1.5
Toaster	8 to 10	Radio	1 to 1.5
Toaster Oven	12	Computer Speakers	2 to 5
Kettle	13	Table Lamp	< 1
Iron	12	Fan	1 to 1.5
Desktop Computer	3	Humidifier	1.5
Laptop Computer	2-5	Electric Blanket	< 1

DEFINITIONS

Small Appliances: Portable or semi-portable machines which are generally used on tabletops, countertops, or other platforms to accomplish a household task.

Heat Generating Appliances: Small appliances that generate heat and run a higher risk of fire when used incorrectly. Include microwaves, toasters, toaster ovens, irons, hair dryers, and kettles. Space heaters are also a type of heat generating appliance, but are addressed in a separate safe work guideline.

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Notes
August 2019	01	Creation of Safe Work Guideline