SKILLSIGNAL™
Construction Safety & Compliance

TOOLBOX TALK

Listing & Labeling: Use the Equipment the Way It Was Tested

TOPIC NO.	DURATION	AUDIENCE
TBT 10	10 to 15 min	All Crew

OSHA REFERENCE 29 CFR 1910 Subpart S · 29 CFR 1926 Subpart K · NEC Article 314 · UL White Book

PROJECT / JOBSITE	DATE	PRESENTED BY

01 THE HOOK

START HERE

Walk any jobsite or warehouse and you'll spot it: a power strip plugged into another power strip, screwed to a wall stud, feeding a space heater. Or a metallic outlet box wired to the end of an extension cord, hanging off a pallet rack. Looks like a creative fix. It's actually two code violations and a fire waiting to happen. Every electrical device on this site was tested and approved for one specific use. Use it any other way and you're not running an approved device anymore. You're running an experiment, with your crew as the test subjects.

02 WHAT LISTING & LABELING MEANS

Most electrical devices are tested by an independent lab like **Underwriters Laboratories (UL)**. If the device passes, UL labels it and publishes **listed instructions** describing exactly how it can be used. OSHA's electrical standards say you can only use a device **according to those listed instructions**. No improvising. No clever workarounds.

That label on the back of the power strip or stamped on the outlet box isn't decoration. It's a contract: the manufacturer says "this is what we tested it for," and OSHA says "then that's what you use it for." Step outside that contract and you're on your own.

03 TWO COMMON MISUSE CASES

CASE 01 POWER STRIPS

Officially called "relocatable power taps" in the UL White Book.

✗ DON'T TREAT IT LIKE PERMANENT WIRING

UL lists power strips for **indoor use only** and not for construction sites. They plug directly into a permanent receptacle, and that's it. They're ***not*** rated to be daisy-chained, not screwed to walls or workbenches, not used as substitute fixed wiring, and not loaded with high-amp tools. The whole strip is rated for **20 amps total or less**, which is barely enough for a couple of computers and printers, never mind a microwave, heater, or hammer drill.

✓ USE IT THE RIGHT WAY

Plug a power strip directly into a permanent wall receptacle to power a few small office-grade items (computers, printers, phone chargers). For tools, heaters, microwaves, refrigerators, or anything jobsite-grade, use a properly rated extension cord straight to a permanent receptacle, or get temporary power installed by a qualified electrician.

CASE 02

METALLIC OUTLET BOXES

The kind you normally see mounted on a wall for receptacles to plug into.

✗ DON'T WIRE ONE TO A CORD

Per **NEC Article 314** (referenced in the UL White Book), a standard metallic outlet box must be mounted to a **solid structure** like a wall, electrical chase-way, or approved pendant system. Wiring one to the end of an extension cord to make a homemade power tap is ***not in the code*** anywhere. It's a field-built device with no testing, no listing, and no approval. If it shocks somebody, the legal exposure lands on whoever built it and whoever let it stay in service.

✓ USE IT THE RIGHT WAY

If you need temporary power at a work zone, run a properly rated extension cord directly to the tool, or install a UL-listed temporary power assembly designed for jobsite use. If a metallic outlet box needs to be mounted, an electrician fastens it to a solid structure per NEC 314. Period.

04 SITE WALK CHECKLIST

These are the listing-and-labeling violations that show up most often on a jobsite. Walk your area today and look for them:

- ☐ Power strips daisy-chained into other power strips or extension cords.
- ☐ Power strips mounted to walls, beams, racks, workbenches, or strut.
- ☐ Power strips powering tools, heaters, microwaves, or other high-amp loads.
- ☐ Power strips being used outdoors or anywhere wet, dusty, or weather-exposed.
- ☐ Outlet boxes wired to the end of an extension cord (homemade quad boxes).
- ☐ Any electrical device with a missing or unreadable UL label.
- ☐ Any device being used in a way the label clearly doesn't cover.

⚠ IF YOU FIND ONE, REPORT IT

Don't "fix" a misused device by re-jiggering it. The fix to a non-listed setup is to remove it from service and replace it with the right tool for the job. Notify your supervisor or safety rep so the hazard can be corrected by someone qualified. The whole point of listing and labeling is that decisions about electrical safety go to people who are trained for them, not the closest set of hands.

05 WHY IT MATTERS

[JOBSITE]	[INDIVIDUAL]	[HOME]
FOR THE CREW	**FOR YOU**	**FOR LIFE OFF-SITE**
Misused electrical devices are one of the top sources of fires and shocks in the construction industry. Catching them on a site walk is cheaper than catching them on the incident report.	When something goes wrong with field-built electrical, the liability runs in every direction. Don't be the guy who built it. Don't be the guy who used it. Don't be the guy who saw it and said nothing.	Same rules at home. The power strip in your garage, the daisy-chain behind your TV, the extension cord powering the holiday inflatables. Read the label. Use it the way it was tested.

06 TODAY'S DRILL

TODAY'S DRILL **SPOT THE SETUP**

Before you leave the gang box today, look around your immediate work area. Find one electrical device that is being used a way the manufacturer never intended. Power strip on the floor? Cord-fed outlet box? Daisy-chained surge protector? Photograph it, write down the location, and report it before end of shift. One bad setup pulled out of service is one less fire that didn't happen.

07 CREW DISCUSSION

Take 2 minutes. Pick one.

1. What's the most creative misuse of an electrical device anyone here has seen on a job? What was the workaround supposed to solve?
2. Does our site have a process for getting proper temporary power installed when crews need it? If so, who handles it?
3. How easy is it on this site to get the right tool for the job? If a power strip on the floor is the easiest answer, that's the problem to fix.

08 ATTENDANCE & SIGN-OFF

All attendees confirm they participated in this Toolbox Talk and understand the content covered.

NAME (PRINT)	SIGNATURE

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE

_____ Date: _____