



## Fire Prevention & Power Strips

August 3, 2022 Power strips are essential for anyone who owns a computer or other electronic devices. The problem is that power strips don't last forever. In fact, most of them don't even last 5 years.

Power strips can be used for many years if they're well-made and cared for. The average life expectancy of a power strip is four years, but this depends on how it's used and stored.

- **Dust and dirt build up over time**, which can cause overheating and create fire hazards. Avoid leaving dust debris on your power strip or storing it in areas where there's a lot of debris or dust accumulation.
- **Heat** is another factor that affects the longevity of power strips. If you have an older model, it may not have built-in thermal overload protection that could shut off the electricity during an overload situation. This makes them more likely to overheat and **cause electrical fires than newer models** that have this feature built in so they will automatically shut down when there's a problem.

As we said the lifespan of a power strip depends on several factors, including the brand and model, how often it's used, and how well you take care of it.

### Here's how long different types can safely be used:

Basic power strips are usually made from plastic and have no surge protection or circuit breaker. They are available at any local store for less than \$10. **You should not use them for more than three years.**

#### Surge Protectors

Surge protectors have better build quality than basic power strips and provide protection against spikes in voltage, which can damage electronics within your home. A surge protector also has an indicator light that lets you know if there is an issue with your home's electrical system. These devices are designed to last up to seven years if they're used properly — but they can also be damaged by surges in voltage, which leads to early failure.

#### Wall Mounted Surge Protectors

Wall-mounted surge protectors are typically installed in between your outlet and device and provide the same type of protection as standard surge protectors but with more design options available.

#### Do Power Strips Have Expiration Dates?

The first step is checking the manufacturer date on the back of the product. This will usually be located underneath where the cord enters the device.

**If there isn't date there, try looking for an FCC stamp on the bottom of your power strip or outlet to see if there is any sign of when it was manufactured and tested for safety compliance.**

If there's no date, or it's too worn down to read, then you should check online for reviews or ask friends who might have similar products and see what they have to say about their experiences with that specific brand or model over time.

#### **What Can Cause Power Strips to Go Bad?**

The most common reason for an older power strip to stop working is a loose connection between the outlet and the cord.

**This can be caused by anything from a poor connection in the manufacturing process to wear and tear on the cord over time.**

Instead, consider using it to connect less important devices like external hard drives or printers that don't need constant access.

**There are three other main ways that power strips can fail:**

- **Overheating:** This is caused by too much current running through the strip. This causes heat buildup and can lead to fire or electrical damage to your devices if left unattended.
- **Short Circuit:** A short circuit occurs when electricity tries to travel through something other than its intended path—like through one wire instead of two wires in a connection point on the strip itself. **This can also cause overheating** because it adds extra resistance that increases power use and slows down connection speeds for all devices connected to the strip
- **Electrical Interference:** Electrical interference can come from faulty **wiring in your home** or workplace.

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**Here are some tips to help you keep your power strip safe and functional for as long as possible:**

1. Use them with **caution, read the instructions.**
2. Avoid overloading them with too many items that draw high amounts of electricity, such as hair dryers or space heaters.
3. Make sure there is at least **one foot of clearance** between the strip and other objects in order for it to work properly.
4. Keep them **away from water sources** such as sinks or bathtubs because water can cause damage to internal components like wires and connections if they come into contact with liquid over time due to corrosion (this could lead to short circuits).

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**You should replace your power strips if they have any of the following conditions:**

- They **don't work properly anymore**; for example, the lights don't come on when you flip the switch or there's no power going through them at all.
- They have **loose plugs or exposed wires** at either end of the strip or between plugs in a row. These conditions could lead to fires or electrical shocks if they come in contact with water or moisture during use.
- They have **thick layers of dust covering their cases**; this could indicate that they haven't been cleaned well enough over time or that they've been used in an environment where dust was common (a warehouse full of boxes, for example).

If you plan on using a power strip regularly, consider investing in one that offers surge protection as well as other features like an indicator light or on/off switch.

- All conductors and equipment must be approved by an OSHA Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL) (29 CFR §1910.303(a)).
- OSHA's electrical standards require that listed or labeled equipment be used or installed in accordance with any instructions included in the listing or labeling by the manufacturer (29 CFR §1910.303(b)(2)).
- OSHA's electrical standards require that outlet devices have an ampere current rating, not less than the current load to be served (29 CFR §1910.304(b) (2)).
- The National Electrical Code and OSHA does not permit extension cords to be used for permanent wiring.

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