

Life Safety Update
Power Strip Usage in Patient Care Vicinity
Prepared for LeadingAge by Hughes Associates and Reviewed by CMS

The Center for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) has issued an S&C Letter permitting the use of power strips in patient care areas and rooms. To use power strips, also known as relocatable power taps, the facility must be in compliance with The Life Safety Code (LSC) 2012 Edition power strip requirements and with all other LSC 2000 Edition electrical system and equipment provisions. Power strips are permitted in resident rooms in long-term care or other residential care facilities in which line-operated electrical appliances for diagnostic, therapeutic, or monitoring purposes (e.g., ventilators) are not used. The use of such power strips in the resident rooms must be in accordance with the necessary precautions and Underwriter Laboratory (UL) listings. Power strips can be used to supplement existing outlets.

Necessary precautions include: installing internal ground fault and over-current protection devices; preventing cords from becoming tripping hazards; and using power strips that are adequate for the number and types of devices used (e.g., no overloading the strips, using GFCIs). UL listing requirements include power strips providing power to non-patient care-related electrical equipment must be Special-purpose Relocatable Power Taps (SPRPT) listed as UL 1363A or UL 60601-1 or Relocatable Power Taps (RPT) listed as UL 1363.

Where line-operated patient-care-related electrical equipment is used in resident rooms (defined as “patient care-related electrical equipment that must be plugged into a receptacle in order to operate, i.e. not battery powered”), the limitations for power strips are based on the Patient Care Vicinity (PCV), a defined term in the S&C letter and NFPA 99 typically meaning around the bed, as follows:

- In the PCV, UL listed Special-purpose Relocatable Power Taps are permitted for use with patient care-related electrical equipment assemblies. Other types of power strips (i.e., listed Relocatable Power Taps or unlisted) are not permitted. The use of power strips in the PCV must comply with the NFPA 99-2012 requirements based on the categorical waiver specified in S&C Letter 14-46-LSC.
- Outside the PCV, listed Special-purpose Relocatable Power Taps or listed Relocatable Power Taps may be used for both patient care-related electrical equipment and non-patient-care-related electrical equipment. Power strips may be used for computers, monitors and printers provided that the necessary precautions identified above are observed.

If an existing facility having line-operated equipment in patient care rooms does not have adequate power receptacles located in the patient care area, two options are available:

1. Retrofit the electrical system to provide proper power requirements compliant with NFPA 70, *National Electrical Code*-1999 Edition; or
2. Apply the categorical waiver as specified in S&C 14-46-LSC and NFPA 99-2012. The surveyor must be notified that the categorical waiver has been applied prior to the survey (i.e., at the entrance conference).