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THE SAFE USE OF POWER BOARDS

With the proliferation of multi-outlet power boards in the home, the Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector (OCEI) warns about the danger of misusing power boards. Investigations of incidents involving power boards by the OCEI and fire authorities reveal the misuse of power boards is prevalent in the home. The following photos demonstrate what can happen.



The current Australian Standard requires that all power boards incorporate minimum safety requirements, including a circuit breaker to prevent overloading if fitted with three or more outlets. It

should be noted that some older models might not incorporate a circuit breaker and it is highly recommended that these units be replaced with a more up to date model.

Despite their inherent overload protection, the use of multiple or cascaded power boards is no substitute for permanently installed power points. Due to their portability and upward facing sockets, power boards are more prone to damage, contamination, and wear and tear than fixed socket outlets.

The OCEI recommends that owners and users of power boards:

- Consider permanently installing fixed power points by a registered electrical contractor for a long term solution
- Do not cascade or piggy-back power boards
- Do not use double adaptors in conjunction with a power board
- Check from time to time to ensure that power boards show no obvious signs of damage and that socket contacts firmly grip the plug when inserted (ie there is no sloppiness when inserting the plug or when it is inserted)
- Do not use power boards outdoors or in dusty or polluted environments, such as workshops and building sites
- Do not use power boards in locations accessible by infants, children or pets
- Do not use power boards in wet areas or areas where there is likely to be water present (eg beneath aquariums, in a kitchen or bathroom, etc)
- Do not continue to use a power board if it has been subjected to moisture or water, or has in any way been damaged.

The OCEI also strongly recommends the use of power boards on power circuits that are protected by a safety switch (Residual Current Device - RCD).