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Use of defective equipment causes hotel fire

Contractor activity resulted in a hotel fire

A contractor was removing lint from the ventilating system in the hotel laundry. The floor lamp he was using to illuminate the work area was not designed for the purpose for which it was intended. It had a defective cord and abuse during its use created an arc, which ignited lint fibers on the floor and subsequently spread to other lint fibers nearby and resulted in a fire.

In a densely populated building, this incident could have easily resulted in a serious fire. What occurred in this incident is a perfect example of how dangerous defective equipment can be, given the right condition. In a separate event, a defective cord leaked enough current that resulted in a fatality a few years ago. In short, damaged electrical equipment has been known to cause fire and death.

Applied regulations and codes

Both the Ontario Electrical Safety Code (OESC) and the Ontario Health and Safety Act and Regulations (OHSA & Regs) requires equipment to be kept in good condition. When the equipment is damaged that it compromises safe operation of the equipment, endangering the building, general public or worker, the equipment must not be used and should be removed. The OESC and OHSA and Regs also specify that workplace must be kept in good housekeeping order, so that the environment does not contribute to injuries or material damage.

What can be done to avert the hazard

Ensure that equipment and tools are used for the intended purpose. Please inspect all your electrical equipment prior to use. Look for damaged or frayed cord, broken casing, removed ground pins, exposed bare wires that can compromise the safety of the tool or equipment. Keep workplace clean from dust and debris that can contribute to fire or safety hazard. Destroy and discard defective cords right away so they can no longer be used. Place defective equipment where they will not be used. Tag it clearly and have a qualified person repair the tool or equipment.

F1 – Fixture used as a trouble light



F2 – Defective cord caused by misuse that later arced and caused a fire

