NIH Division of the Fire Marshal

Administrative Interpretation 17-8
Portable Cooking Appliances

Code reference: NFPA 1 (2015) and NFPA 101 (2018)

Background: NFPA 1 allows AHJs to prohibit sources of ignition under conditions deemed to be hazardous. Both referenced codes contain annex guidance regarding portable appliances for limited cooking permitted outside a kitchen. Written Federal OSHA interpretations address the use of small household appliances and their power supply.

Interpretation:

1. Appliances permitted in offices, office areas, and cubicles:
   - Coffee makers
   - Other brew pots
   - Microwave ovens
   - Refrigerators
2. Appliances permitted in designated lounge, kitchen, and break areas (in addition to above):
   - Toasters
   - Toaster ovens
   - air fryers
   - slow cookers
   - popcorn poppers
   - Hot plates with enclosed heat elements (not permitted in Building 10)
3. Limitations for all above appliances:
   - All cooking must be attended; timers must not be used
   - Must be listed (UL, FM, etc.) and remain in good working condition (includes cords)
   - Must be placed only on noncombustible surfaces
   - Must be located and operated in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations
   - Must be directly connected to wall outlets with no extension cords
   - Electric loads and capacities must be verified prior to use by the Office of Research Facilities (see your Facility Manager)
4. Appliances not included in 1 and 2 above are only permitted with written DFM approval.
5. Open flame cooking (canned fuel, BBQs, etc.) requires a DFM Hazardous Work Permit

Supersedes: N/A

Prepared by: Deputy Fire Marshal Mat Chibbaro, P.E.

Date Issued 12/12/17 **Fire Marshal** A. P. McCabe

NFPA and OSHA excerpts provided for convenience

(Highlights by DFM)

NFPA 1, 10.1.6 The AHJ shall have the authority to prohibit any or all open flames or other sources of ignition where circumstances make such conditions hazardous.

NFPA 1, A.14.10.2.1 It is not the intent that an area with equipment such as a beverage brewpot, microwave oven, and a toaster be considered a kitchen.

NFPA 101, A.18.3.2.5.2 This provision is intended to permit appliances used for reheating, limited cooking, and food preparation, such as microwave ovens, hot plates, electric skillets, toasters, and nourishment centers to be exempt from the requirements for commercial cooking equipment and hazardous area protection. Limited quantities of butter, cooking spray, or oil can be used.

Excerpt of July 16, 2003 OSHA interpretation in response to Mr. Lawrence A. Gingerich, President, Proactive Environmental Inc.

Question 3: Is it acceptable for employees to use a UL-listed coffeemaker or other small appliance labeled as "Household Use Only" in an office or small break-room?

Reply: The employer must ensure that all electrical equipment used by employees meets or exceeds OSHA standards. Whether an employer's use of UL-listed coffee makers and other small appliances labeled "For Household Use Only" is allowed under the "instructions included in the listing or labeling" depends on an evaluation of the relevant factors, such as those mentioned in the answer to the preceding question. Like Underwriters Laboratories, OSHA recognizes that the use of small appliances in offices or break rooms may be comparable to their use in a household and thus would not be expected to present a higher level of hazard.

Excerpt of November 18, 2002 OSHA interpretation response to Wade R. Abnett with Middle River Aircraft Systems:

Question: What is the current compliance status on the use of "power strips"?

Reply: Power strips are designed for use with a number of low-powered loads, such as computers, peripherals, or audio/video components. Power loads are addressed by 29 CFR §1910.304(b)(2), *Outlet devices*: "*Outlet devices shall have an ampere rating not less than the load to be served.*" Power strips are not designed for high power loads such as space heaters, refrigerators and microwave ovens, which can easily exceed the recommended ampere ratings on many power strips. They must also meet the requirements of §1910.305(g)(1), *Use of flexible cords and cables*. For example, the flexible power cord is not to be routed through walls, windows, ceilings, floors, or similar openings.