

Electrical & Extension-Cord Checks

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | October 6, 2026 | Pre-use checks for corded tools on construction sites

Why this matters

A tool may run even when its cord, plug or protective arrangement is unsafe. Before plugging in, check the complete setup from the supply point to the work, including where the cord will travel.

Objective: Recognize defects and verify the electrical protection assigned to this task.

Key hazards or failure points

Damaged insulation or plugs; unsuitable equipment for wet conditions; overloaded or mismatched cords; crushed leads; exposed electrical parts; and protection that is assumed rather than confirmed.

Practical controls

- Use equipment and cords suitable for the tool, environment and intended load under their instructions and the site electrical plan. Identify exposed or concealed electrical hazards before the task.
- Keep damaged equipment out of service. Do not tape over a defect and treat it as repaired. Have electrical defects assessed and corrected by people authorized and qualified for that work.
- Route leads away from traffic, water, sharp edges and other damage. Confirm the required ground-fault protection or compliant assured equipment grounding conductor program for the covered construction circuits.

Verify It in the Field

- With equipment safely disconnected, inspect accessible cords, plugs, connectors and tool housings using the required procedure. Check for missing parts, damage and signs of overheating. Do not open enclosures or touch exposed conductors.
- Ask the responsible person which electrical protection applies at this supply point. For a GFCI, use its manufacturer-specified check under the site procedure and record the result; a button's presence is not proof of function.
- Where an assured grounding program applies, confirm the equipment's required inspection and current test record under that program. A colored mark alone is not enough without a traceable record. Verify the actual cord route before energizing.

Stop and reassess

Stop for damage, repeated tripping, moisture exposure beyond equipment suitability, an unknown protective arrangement or a changed route. Disconnect safely if authorized; keep others clear and notify the responsible person. Do not reset repeatedly or bypass protection. Recheck repaired or replacement equipment before authorized use.

Ask the crew

- What protects this circuit, and what evidence shows it is ready?
- Where could today's route damage the cord or expose another worker?
- What defect or trip means we stop and call for help?

A running tool is not evidence of a safe electrical setup.

Next step: Record today's changes and checks on the free JSA Planning and Field-Verification Sheet. Supervisor check and attendance are separate.

[Free JSA planning sheet](#)

References: OSHA 1926.404(b)(1) and 1926.416; model-specific instructions. Expanded explanation and references accompany the web version.