BEWARE OF COUNTERFEIT ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

Each year, the counterfeiting of well-known brands and products continues to rise. Such well-known counterfeited brands, including consumer safety and critical electrical products, are estimated to be 5 percent to 7 percent of world trade. Professionals working with or around electrical equipment in occupational setting may come across such counterfeit electrical products.

Therefore, it is important for professionals to understand the dangers that counterfeit electrical products pose and how to remove them from the workplace. Knowing how to alert the proper authorities and the original manufacturer ultimately helps to prevent potentially hazardous devices from being installed.

Counterfeit electrical products, many of which are intended to serve as protective devices, are unsafe lookalikes. Using counterfeit electrical products can result in a higher risk for failure of malfunction, which may result in electrical shock, overheating, or short circuits that can cause fires or explosions. Such dangers can cost workers their lives and cause considerable property damage.

Counterfeiters use deception and prices that are below market level to find their way into the workplace. As counterfeiters become more sophisticated, detecting the difference between a counterfeit and a genuine product is becoming more difficult. However, professionals can help. If everyone played an active role in stopping counterfeit products from being bought and sold, the demand for counterfeit electrical products would decrease.

If you suspect a counterfeit product has made it into the workplace, follow the tips below to report a counterfeit and ensure you take the proper steps to mitigate the impact on the workplace.

1.) Contact brand owner. If a product is believed to be counterfeit, contact the brand owner. This will allow authentication of the suspect product and ensure the potentially unsafe device is removed from the marketplace.

2.) Provide as much information as possible. The more information a brand has the better chance it can find similar products and remove them from the marketplace to protect consumers. This includes: Name, business name, address, domain name and any other identifiers of vendor. Description of commodity, including explanation on why it is suspected to be counterfeit.

3.) Set up reporting process. To protect yourself, your colleagues and your work environment, it is beneficial to establish a companywide process for reporting counterfeit electrical products. This provides a collaborative outlet for alerting fellow workers and protecting your property.

4.) Default to International Property Rights Center. If you cannot find brand contact information, don’t stop there. You can always contact the IPR Center, which will disseminate the information for appropriate response. Contact the IRP Center at IPRCenter@dhs.gov or (866) IPR-2060.

5.) Buy authentic. The best way to avoid counterfeit electrical products in the first place is to purchase products directly from manufacturer’s authorized distributors or resellers. There is higher risk of counterfeits if you cannot trace the path of commerce back to the original manufacturer.

Understanding the required steps to report suspect electrical products in the workplace is crucial for preventing potentially hazardous products from causing harm to people and property. By practicing the above steps, professionals can lessen their risks of harm from counterfeit electrical products by keeping them out of the workplace.

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