

CONSUMER'S EDGE

Beach bauble bingo

If you're heading to the coast or some other shoreline this Labor Day weekend, the International Gemological Institute recommends leaving your bling in your jewelry box.

Fine jewelry doesn't mix well with sand, surf and suntan lotion. Here are some warnings from Jerry Ehrenwald, president of IGI and a gemologist with more than 40 years of experience:

■ Cold water can cause fingers to shrink, making it easy for rings to slip off.

■ Abrasion from sand can act like coarse sandpaper on gems and precious metals.

■ Suntan lotions and sunscreens can coat gemstones and reduce their ability to reflect and refract light, resulting in a loss of brilliance.

If you must bring your jewelry with you on vacation, Ehrenwald recommends keeping it in a hotel safe or deposit box when you're not wearing it, instead of unattended in a hotel room or a car.

No shock

When it comes to finding the right extension cord for a job, getting one long enough to reach from the device to the electrical outlet is only part of the equation.

Paul Holstein, the chief operating officer of CableOrganizer.com, says "power extension cords are not created equal." Instead, they are manufactured for use in specific applications and varying amounts of electrical current.

"By basing the extension cord choice on each task's specific re-

quirements," Holstein says in a news release, "you can greatly reduce the risks of fires, electrical shock and injury that come with improper use."

Some ways you can make sure your use of extension cords remains safe and free of surprises:

Classified information. You can use a cord classified for outdoor use inside your house. But never use one outside that is classified for indoor use. The insulation on outdoor cords is made of tougher material capable of withstanding temperature changes and UV rays.

Check the wattage. Every extension cord has a wattage rating, based the number of watts it can safely transmit. Make sure the rating isn't exceeded by the appliance or tool you are using. If you're powering multiple devices, add up their wattage requirements.

Look for approval. Buy only cords bearing the UL symbol. The presence of the UL mark indicates that type of cord has been tested by Underwriters Laboratories and received consumer safety approval.

Watch for red flags. Cords with cut or damaged insulation can cause fires, burns and electric shocks. So can cords with grounding pins or plug blades that have been cut, filed or otherwise altered.

Monitor measure

When it comes to self-test blood pressure monitors and glucose meters, some devices don't measure up, according to Consumer Reports.

An article in Consumer Reports' September issue reveals big differences in accuracy and consistency among self-monitor-

ing kits for hypertension and diabetes.

Consumer Reports evaluated 16 different blood pressure monitors and 13 glucose meters. Four "upper arm cuff" blood pressure monitors had better overall accuracy than wrist monitors and received an "excellent" rating in the testing:

■ Omron Women's Advanced Elite 7300W (\$100, also includes a larger size cuff that fits most men)

■ CVS by Microlife Deluxe Advanced 344534 (\$100)

■ Omron HEM-711AC (\$90)

■ ReliOn HEM-741CREL from Wal-Mart (a CR "best buy" at \$40)

Only one glucose meter, the OneTouch UltraMini (\$20, \$1.14 per test strip), received an "excellent" rating.

Buy lines

"Gold's father is dirt, yet it regards itself as noble."

YIDDISH PROVERB

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