

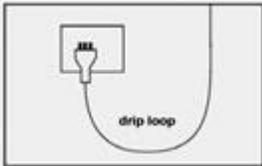
DON'T FORGET THE DRIP LOOP



I was speaking with a friend today, who happens to be a fire inspector and we got to talking about safe electrical practices around aquariums. After that conversation, I was curious, so I asked the next few people I talked with if they used drip loops on their aquarium equipment. I was shocked how few people even knew what a drip loop was.



What is a drip loop?



When plugging in any electrical equipment where the cord comes down from the aquarium a drip loop should be used. A drip loop is formed by allowing the electrical cord to drop lower than the electrical outlet and then come back up to the outlet and plug in. This prevents water from running into an electrical outlet. Many things can cause water to run down a cord, even condensation. With a drip loop the water will run off the lowest point of the cord and drop onto the floor, instead of running into the outlet.

This is especially critical with saltwater! Water and electricity do not mix well, but saltwater really makes sparks fly when it hits an outlet.

A few more things to check



Most of us use power strips next to or under our aquariums because we need multiple outlets. Do not lay these strips flat on the cabinet bottom where any flooding, like a trickle filter sump running over, will cause water to run into the strip. Instead, hang the strip vertically on the back or inside wall of the cabinet. One or 2 small screws will do the trick. The strips have slotted openings on the back to make hanging them easy. Now it is safer and looks more professional too. Try to avoid the real cheap strips, since the breaker protection on them does not usually work well. We sell power strips that add functionality too, like built-in timers for automatic day/night lighting.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFI or GFCI) are safety devices that are especially useful when electricity is used around water. They detect minor current leaks in a circuit and very quickly shut down the circuit to help prevent shock or fire. They are available as electrical outlets or circuit breakers. You can replace an existing outlet or breaker with a GFCI device, although this a job that usually would require an electrician. You also may be able to find a GFCI device that plugs into an existing outlet, then you plug your device or outlet strip into the GFCI device.

Last thing, use common sense. Look over your setup and make sure there are no obvious hazards. Check for cords with bare spots in the insulation, burned connectors in light fixtures or corroded electrical connections. Repair or replace anything that is in bad shape *before* it can cause a problem!