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Written by Vic Flagello - Hubbell Inc. on March 09, 2020



I think as homeowners we've all noticed this problem: We have more and more kitchen appliances and electronic devices to enjoy, but fewer and fewer convenient places to plug them into.

Surely there are a number of lifestyle trends at work here—not only do we have more gadgets enhancing our daily lives, but also there has been a rethinking of the design of the modern kitchen. Most of us now prepare meals on islands—*islands* that are getting bigger and bigger (I've seen like 20 feet or more) and nicer and nicer (think quartz and granite)—as opposed to the “old days” of working on tile countertops with adjacent wall outlets. The advent of the shorter, safer, generally less “snaggable” two foot cord is a factor too.

For the most part, the way the issue has been solved in the past is to put outlets on the *sides* of the islands. Problems? Well, the short appliance cord means that we have to keep all the appliances near the edge of the island, wasting all that increasing space. Meanwhile, the cord dangling off the side can often be an accident waiting to happen as people squeeze by or curious youngsters are tempted to yank on it.

The problem is similar in many commercial workplace environments that use a lot of desks, countertops and workstations and need convenient power access—like commercial kitchens, medical facilities, schools, libraries, laboratories and more.

Safety is paramount

The reason for the seemingly inconvenient access to power in the modern tabletop design, of course, is mostly one of safety. Moisture and electricity don't mix, and if you move the electrical outlet from the side of the island or desktop to the top where it would be more accessible, it seems like it would be open and vulnerable to potentially dangerous spills from cooking liquids, beverage glasses, beer and wine bottles, ingredient containers and other items that might be placed on the home kitchen island in use. In commercial settings maybe coffee mugs, medical reagents and soft drinks might be among the threats. With any of these, obviously, any accidental, misdirected hand motion—almost as common as breathing for us imperfect humans—could quickly lead to a tip over, shorting out the electricity and/or causing injuries.

So Hubbell engineers began to consider the question—to use a “kitcheny” metaphor—was there an innovation that we could develop that would give people a way to have their cake and eat it too?

“Yes!” to power that is *both* safe and convenient

Or, put another way, could we help people have easy access to power on top of the island while preparing meals for their families (or performing their work functions), and also do so in optimum safety?

Yes and yes.

The reason is an innovative new product called the Countertop Pop-up Receptacle. It’s a set of two convenient outlets that sit, recessed, in the top of the island until needed, at which point a quick click allows you to “pop them up” for convenient use, putting power where you want it, when you want it.

This device uses a patented silicone gasket that keeps liquids from getting into the electrical parts when popped up—both when there is something plugged in and when the outlet is empty. In addition, the device is protected from liquid incursion when closed into the counter too.

But don’t just take my word for it. Underwriters Laboratory (UL) put the Countertop Pop-up Receptacle through some stringent tests and they passed handily. With one test, called the UL498 Section 146 Spill Test, for example, a half gallon of a water/salt mixture was directed toward “the most disadvantageous area”—that is, straight at the open outlet. The product safely repelled the liquid and kept on working as intended. In a commercial-oriented test, the threat used was 8 ounces of hot coffee. Same result. A similar test was also performed with the pop-up receptacle placed down, to make sure that no liquid could drip down into the mechanism from the top. No problem here either. You can see some of these tests in action at <https://www.hubbell.com/wiringdevice-kellems/en/residential-solutions>. Check it out—the video is pretty dramatic!

Oh, and, of course, the device complies fully with the National Electrical

Code (NEC) 406.5(E) for countertop installations.

Put one, two or more at strategic locations on even the biggest island, and you're good to go!

“Yes!” to great aesthetics and long term performance too!

Safety and convenience are vital, but homeowners know that there's more to life than “just” that—like the ongoing beauty of their kitchens. Ask any contractor just how important a good looking kitchen is to their customers!

So you'll be glad to know that this product has got the aesthetics part nailed down too. The Countertop Pop-up Receptacle is made to not only look great on its own but also match other kitchen fixtures—it comes in finishes like nickel, stainless steel-like aluminum, brass, bronze, chrome, black, and white. Further, its round profile (most outlets are square or rectangular) means that it literally can never be placed crookedly, ensuring the integrity of the beautiful lines of any countertop. And, because it only recedes about 6” into the island, you don't give up any storage space either.

In addition, like one would expect of a quality fixture in today's kitchens, its performance is built to last. The Countertop Pop-up Receptacle is rated to a minimum 10,000 up and down pushes—that's like 13 years of once a day use. It's constructed of rugged polycarbonate and heat resistant thermoplastics so it's heat proof and bang proof too—put a pot of pasta or a coffee pot down on it, no problem! Heavy pots and pans carelessly tossed into the cabinet? It will stand up to them too!

The Countertop Pop-up Receptacle comes in 15 amp as well as larger 20 amp versions suitable for commercial and high end residential use. Further innovations are planned too—like look for a version with a wireless induction charger at the top for convenient phone charging, coming later this year.

Want to know more? Contact me anytime at vflagell@hubbell.com. I look forward to speaking with you!

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