



Portable Electric Space Heaters

Safety Tips



Portable Space Heaters

Portable space heaters are used in millions of homes and workplaces. Whether in an employee break room or office space, such as a cubicle, portable space heaters can be found in all places of employment. It is important, however, to point out that these temporary heating devices pose significant hazards and account for millions of dollars in property damage due to fire. Other injuries such as electrical shock and burns or even worse, death, can be contributed to the use of portable space heaters. Fires and injuries occur due to electrical overloads, improper use of the portable space heater, and from ignition of nearby combustibles such as paper, flammable liquids, or even clothing. Some employers have banned the use of portable space heaters within the workplace, but most businesses or workplaces have no restrictions on the use of portable space heaters, especially in an office environment. Guidelines or safety precautions for the use of portable space heaters are listed below.

- Use a portable space heater which is UL (Underwriters Laboratories) listed or listed by another nationally recognized testing laboratory. Space heaters which are UL listed are tested so they meet certain safety standards.
- Read and follow all manufacturers' instructions for operation.
- Use only portable space heaters which will turn off automatically if the heater is tipped over or not upright. This is known as "tip over protection" and is accomplished by either a switch or temperature limiting controls built within the heater and varies with different manufacturers.
- Never run the portable space heater attachment cord under rugs, carpet, or other materials.

- Always plug a portable space heater directly into a wall receptacle and never into an extension cord, surge protector, or relocatable power tap (multi-outlet box device). Portable electric space heaters draw large amounts of current and the high current flow through these various connections can cause these components to deteriorate resulting in excessive heat resulting in fire.
- Never leave portable space heaters unattended and be sure to turn them off and unplug them before leaving your home or office.
- Do not use portable space heaters in damp and wet areas or where water is present.
- Always place a portable space heater directly on the floor on a stable surface and never on boxes, books, or other unstable objects and never place on top of a desk or table.
- Don't place portable space heaters near exit ways or travel paths.
- Keep portable space heaters at least 3 feet away from all combustible materials and don't place next to trash or waste receptacles.
- Don't place space heaters directly underneath desks where your legs can easily knock the space heater over.
- Use space heaters with a temperature control feature which will shut off the heater when a desired temperature is reached.
- Use space heaters also equipped with a high temperature limit shut off device which will shut down the heater when components become too hot.
- Frequently check the attachment cord and other parts of the space heater including the switches and protective grill cover or guard.

By following the safety practices or recommendations outlined in this safety tip sheet the potential sources for fire and injury when using portable space heaters can be reduced at home and in the workplace.



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