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Space Heaters

by Scarlett Sadler

As the temperatures outside are cooling down, the temperatures inside are heating up, and sometimes that heat isn't coming from the building's HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) system. When employees can't control the temperature indoors, they often come up with creative ways to keep themselves warm. One of those ways is with portable space heaters.

Portable space heaters are high-wattage appliances that have the potential to ignite nearby combustibles when the heater is lacking basic safety features or when operated incorrectly. These small heat emitting devices can pose a significant workplace safety hazard. If you do not have a strict policy that forbids the use of portable space heaters in your district, it is important to establish guidelines for their safe use.



Selection

- Choose a space heater that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, common certifications include UL (Underwriters Laboratories), CSA Group, and ETL (Intertek Group).
- Ensure the selected portable space heater is equipped with a timer, automatic temperature control, and overheat protection.
- Ensure the selected portable space heater has a cool touch housing and a safety tip-over switch.
- Consider the square footage of the room to be heated and select an appropriately sized portable space heater for the room.

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Electrical Safety

- Before use, inspect the portable space heater, cord, and plug for damage. Never operate the heater if you suspect damage.
- Do not power portable space heaters with an extension cord or power strip.
- Portable space heaters should be plugged directly into wall outlet. Ensure that the plug fits snugly into the outlet.
- To prevent overload and potential blown fuses or tripped breakers, do not plug any other electrical device into the same outlet as a portable space heater.
- When not in use unplug the portable space heater.
- Do not run the portable space heater power cord underneath furniture, carpets or rugs.



General Safety

- Only operate portable space heaters in wellventilated areas.
- All sides of portable space heaters should be placed at least 3 feet away from all combustible materials, e.g. file cabinets, desks, trash cans, paper boxes, etc.
- Portable space heaters should be placed on flat level surfaces on the ground.
- Portable space heaters should not be operated near water.
- Do not operate portable space heaters under desks or in other enclosed areas.
- Portable space heaters should not be left on and unattended.
- Portable space heaters should only be operated in areas that will be continuously occupied.
- Portable space heaters should not obstruct walkways, paths of travel, or doorways.
- Ensure proper supervision when operating portable space heaters around children.

Educating your employees on safe, portable space heater usage can reduce the risks to your employees and your facilities. For additional assistance, please contact [PRISM's Risk Control Department](#).