



Selection and Appropriate Use of Portable Electrical Space Heaters

Portable Electric Space Heaters

A portable electric space heater is a self-contained device for heating a specific area.

Selection

Portable electric space heaters used on campus must be equipped with the following fire safety features:

- The heater must be electrically powered and listed by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Intertek, or another nationally recognized testing agency for appliances. Tags or labels indicating the device has been tested and approved by either of these agencies can be found on the electrical cord or die stamped on the heater itself.
- The space heater must have a thermostat for heat regulation. The heater's thermostat will sense that the area has reached a certain temperature and reduce heating until the temperature in the area drops (very much like the thermostat in your house). Heaters without this feature (with simple "on/off" or "high/low" switches) continue to heat without any regulation and can easily cause fires.
- Portable electric space heaters must have a tip-over shutdown feature. If the heater is knocked over, the unit must automatically shut off.

Only ceramic or oil-filled space heaters are permitted. Radiant heaters (having glowing wires) are not allowed.

Fuel powered (propane or kerosene) space heater are not permitted for inside use.

Appropriate Use

Before purchasing a portable electric space heater for your area, have your maintenance staff review the existing heating / ventilation in your building and space. If they are not able to make the necessary changes to the heating, the maintenance technician can also provide an evaluation of the electrical service for your space to ensure it has the capabilities of handling the electrical load of the portable electric space heater.

- Approved portable electric space heaters are to be plugged directly into a wall outlet; no extension cords, power strips, or surge protectors allowed. The wall outlet should not have other high current draw appliances such as coffee makers, microwaves, or refrigerators.
- Portable electric space heaters should never be left unattended.
- Maintain 3 feet of clearance to items located around the heater.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Prohibited Use

- Use within 3 feet of any combustible material
- Space heaters should not be used in the presence of flammable or combustible liquids
- Space heaters shall be located on the floor of the space. They cannot be elevated on furniture or equipment
- Never use a space heater to heat or dry materials
- The space heater's power cords shall be kept out of paths of travel and shall be placed under floor runners or rugs
- Space heaters are prohibited in campus residence halls*

Violations of the appropriate space heaters and prohibited usage will result in the usage being revoked.

References:

Section 4102 of the 2024 International Fire Code with state amendments, University of Iowa Residence Hall Policies*

If you have questions regarding space heaters, contact Campus Fire Safety Coordinator (319) 335-5022.