

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Space Heater Safety



In 2005, space heaters (whether portable or stationary) caused 73% of home fire deaths.¹ Used improperly, space heaters can also be the most dangerous fire hazard in your workplace. Misusing space heaters can put you and your co-workers at risk of fire or burn injuries. What follows are suggested best practices for avoiding risks associated with space heaters.

Ensure that your space heater has been tested in an independent laboratory and is legal to use in your area. Space heaters should have UL² marks indicating this information.



Always follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully when installing your space heater.

Never plug your space heater into an extension cord, since extension cords have high currents and could melt the cord and start a fire. Space heaters should be plugged directly into outlets with adequate electrical capacity.

Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that might burn, including the wall. Never store newspapers, clothing, files, or books within three feet of space heaters.

Space heaters are intended to provide supplemental heat. Do not use them to dry clothing, cook food, warm paints, heat coffee cups, etc.

Never leave space heaters on while unattended. Shut them off when nobody is around to monitor them.

Ensure that there is sufficient ventilation in the location where the space heater is used.

Do not use a space heater if it has been damaged or does not work properly. Never attempt to modify space heaters or perform homemade repairs on them.

Be cautious before touching the exterior surface of space heaters. Even though the surface may not look hot, it could cause burn injuries.

Always position the space heater in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. For example, do not hang space heaters in mid-air if they are designed to sit upright on a floor.

Be aware of the nearest fire extinguishers in your workplace before you use a space heater.

¹ NFPA "Home Fires Involving Heating Equipment " report by John R. Hall, Jr., November 2007

² UL (Underwriters Laboratory) marks indicate that a product has been tested and that the product satisfies UL's safety requirements.

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This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.