

SAFETY TIPS: SPACE HEATER DANGERS AND PRECAUTIONS

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 25,000 residential fires every year are associated with the use of space heaters, resulting in more than 300 deaths. In addition, an estimated 6,000 people every year receive emergency room care for burn injuries associated with contacting the hot surfaces of room heaters, mostly in non-fire situations.

Space heaters present serious fire and electrical hazards, and are not efficient from an energy standpoint; therefore, the use of space heaters at school districts is strongly discouraged.

If your district allows the use of space heaters, following are some safety tips:

- Before operating a heater, always read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Only purchase newer model heaters that have all of the current safety features. Make sure the heater carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label.
- Make sure it has an auto shut-off switch; these units will shut off when knocked over.
- Select a space heater that is thermostatically controlled and properly sized for the room you wish to heat. Most heaters come with a general sizing table.
- Locate the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic and direct them away from other combustible materials such as papers, fabric, plastics, office furniture, etc.
- NEVER use a space heater where flammable materials or vapors may be present.
- Always turn off a heater and unplug it when you leave the office. NEVER leave an operating space heater unattended.
- Before use, ensure that the space heater is clean and not covered with dust. The cord must be in good condition and not frayed.
- NEVER use an extension cord or power strip with a space heater. The heater should be plugged directly into a permanent wall outlet (receptacle).
- To prevent overloading an electrical circuit, a space heater must be plugged into a circuit that is rated for 15 amps or more.
- Never run a power cord under a carpet or floor mat.
- Do not use space under desks or in other enclosed spaces.

Inspect space heaters at least annually and have them repaired, as needed, by a qualified electrician. Space heaters that cannot be repaired must be discarded with the plug cut off to prevent inadvertent use by others.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission also has a helpful publication regarding the safe use of personal space heaters, which can be found at:

<http://www.cpsc.gov//Global/Safety%20Education/Home-Appliances-Maintenance-Structure/098.pdf>

Should you have any questions regarding this Bulletin or need any assistance, please contact your Keenan Loss Control Consultant.

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