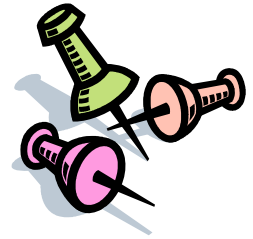




Safety Note

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY



Safety Note #143

PORTABLE SPACE HEATER USE



Photo Courtesy of ANR AO

Portable space heaters are an effective way to provide personal heat comfort at a workstation. Used correctly, they are a safe source of heating. Unfortunately, portable space heaters are responsible for many fires and injuries. According to a study by the National Fire Protection Association, space heaters were responsible for one-fourth of home heating fires in 2003. They were also responsible for three-fourths of fire deaths related to home heating. This Safety Note provides information about the use of portable space heaters.

Type of Portable Space Heater That Can Be Used

- Space heaters must be Underwriters Laboratories listed (UL rated) or Factory Mutual approved for their intended use.
- Space heaters must have a thermostat to automatically shut down the unit when the desired temperature is achieved.
- Space heaters must have a tip-over automatic shutdown feature.
- The space heater appliance power cord must have a grounded three prong plug.
- A space heater with an open grill must have a fan forcing air through the grill.
- A fully enclosed space heater that, by design, has no external surfaces that reach temperatures capable of igniting material placed against the surface.
- The space heater must not use more than 1,500 watts to operate.

Safe Practices for Portable Space Heaters

- The space heater must be plugged directly into a three prong wall outlet. Do not use three prong plug adapters. Do not use extension cords or power strips due to the risk of overheating and possibly catching fire.
- Space heaters must be kept away from any combustible and flammable materials.
- Nothing shall be placed on top of, or in contact, with a space heater.
- Space heaters must be placed in plain sight (not hidden under a desk).
- Space heaters that are missing guards, control knobs, feet, etc., must be taken out of service immediately.
- Space heaters of any type are prohibited in laboratories.
- Turn off space heaters whenever the room is unoccupied.
- Never put a space heater on furniture or other appliances. Space heaters should always be placed on the floor.
- Do not hide electrical appliance cords under rugs or carpets, as placing anything on top of the cord could damage the cord or cause a fire by overheating.
- Do not block a space heater's air intake or outlet.
- Do not use space heaters for drying clothing or any other materials.
- Do not use space heaters in wet conditions or to defrost freezers.
- Periodically inspect and clean the space heater's air intake and outlet.