

SPACE HEATERS AND OTHER TEMPORARY PORTABLE HEATERS

In the event a heating system fails, or there is inadequate heat to an area, every effort should be made to correct the problem with building heating before using temporary or portable heat sources. Portable heaters are strongly discouraged due to energy and fire safety issues, but can be allowed in some instances provided the requirements below are met.

FIRE SAFETY

Space heaters can pose a serious fire hazard. Fire codes require most to be at least three feet from combustible items, so they should not be placed under a desk or near people or animals.

Open-coil type space heaters present a higher fire danger and are prohibited in University buildings.



Open coil style heaters are not allowed

An exception are products rated zero clearance, including radiant heating panels such as “Cozy Legs” brand for small spaces. They are not hot to the touch and can be safely used under a desk.



Radiant heating panels do not require 3 foot clearance



Try to warm yourself instead of the entire room

Because it is generally easier to heat your body than the entire room, other recommended methods to provide personal heat include blankets, heating pads and hot water bottles.

ELECTRICAL REQUIREMENTS

Additional electrical requirements for space heaters:

- Must be UL listed
- Must have “tip-over” protection so that power shuts off if it falls over
- Must have a thermostat to automatically shut down at desired temperature

Space heaters must be plugged directly into a building outlet, never an extension cord or power strip.

RESTRICTED USES AND LOCATIONS

Space heaters are not allowed in labs or other areas where hazardous materials are present.

Do not use space heaters in damp locations, such as bathrooms or kitchens.

Do not use space heaters in areas where hazardous materials, especially flammable or combustible liquids are present.

Keep space heaters away from exits, walkways, and other paths of travel.

Do not use space heaters near small children or animals.

Space heaters are prohibited in most campus housing; contact HFS or your housing representative for specific information. For off-campus buildings, contact your property manager for any additional restrictions.

The electrical distribution system for some buildings may not be able to support space heaters, especially multiple units at the same time. If this becomes a problem, space heaters may be ordered to be removed, even if all other code and safety requirements are met. Tripping the breaker is not only an inconvenience to fellow occupants, it can be dangerous.

Space heaters that repeatedly trip electrical circuit breakers should be removed.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

If all safety and code requirements can be met and you plan to use a space heater, ensure you follow these additional safety tips:

- Heaters must be monitored at all times when in operation; do not leave running unattended and do not use heaters in rooms that are not continually occupied.
- Ensure cords are not placed so that they can become trip hazards. If necessary, protect cords with specifically designed cord covers, not tape, cardboard or other materials.
- Physical condition of space heaters must be visually inspected daily prior to use.
- If the cords are frayed or show signs of damage, or if the heater is damaged or missing safety features, take it out of service until it can be inspected and repaired by trained and competent personnel.



Examples of standard space heaters that require 3 feet of clearance from combustibles

Please contact EH&S Fire Safety at 206.685.0341 for more information about temporary or supplemental heating.