



SPACE HEATER SAFETY

Stay Safe *and* Warm this Season

As the temperature drops during the winter holiday season, many families will turn to alternative heat sources, such as portable electric space heaters, to help warm their homes.

Each winter, heating is a leading cause of residential structure fires. Space heaters can be an effective way to heat small areas; however, if used improperly this equipment presents increased risk of fire, electrical shock, and electrocution.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) recommends exercising caution and being mindful of the risks associated with using electric space heaters to supplement home heating this winter.

Safety Tips

- Read the manufacturer's instruction manual before using any space heater.
- Ensure that the heater bears the mark of a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as UL, CSA, or ETL.
- Make sure all heaters are at least three feet away from any combustible materials such as bedding, clothing, curtains, furniture, and rugs.
- Keep space heaters away from water. Check the manual to determine whether the heater is intended to be used in locations like bathrooms.
- Avoid using space heaters in rooms where children are unsupervised. Children may stick their fingers or other objects through the protective guards, causing burns or shock.

- Do not use space heaters with extension cords; plug them directly into an outlet on a relatively unburdened circuit.
- When plugging in a space heater, make sure that the circuit can adequately and safely handle the added demand.
- Space heaters have hot parts that can cause sparking. Do not use them in areas where flammable liquids such as gasoline or kerosene are used or stored.
- Space heaters are meant to supply supplemental heat. Do not use them to warm bedding, cook food, dry clothing or thaw pipes.
- Turn off, unplug, and safely store portable space heaters when not in use.
- Never remove the grounding feature on a plug by removing the third prong.
- If you do not have a three-hole wall outlet, use an adapter to connect the heater's three-prong plug.
- Check the cord before plugging in the heater. If frayed, worn or damaged, then stop use immediately.
- Keep space heaters out of high-traffic and exit areas.
- To prevent electrical shock, plug space heaters into ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). GFCIs should be used in any area where water may come in contact with electrical products.

Facts & Statistics

- Heating equipment was involved in an estimated 53,000 home fires last year. (Source: *National Fire Protection Association*)
- These fires accounted for 14 percent of all home fires and caused an estimated 260 deaths, 1,300 injuries, and \$500 million in property damage.
- More than 25,000 residential fires every year are associated with the use of space heaters. (Source: *U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission*)
- In 2005, space heaters accounted for 32 percent of the home heating fires and 73 percent of home heating fire deaths. (Source: *National Fire Protection Association*)
- Roughly 33 percent of homeowners admitted to keeping their space heaters running overnight.
- Another 19 percent admitted to leaving space heaters unattended.
- The peak months for residential portable heating fires are January and February.