



Space Heaters in University Facilities

Whether purchased by the University or the personal property of the user, two issues affect the use of space heaters in campus buildings — fire safety and energy efficiency. The efficient use of energy by the University is important, and electric space heaters are a very costly means of heating. If a member of the campus community feels that a space heater is necessary for adequate warmth, this may indicate that the building heating system needs to be adjusted or repaired. The Facilities Management Department should be notified through the Building Executive if the heating system is incapable of meeting comfort requirements. Facilities Management should also be contacted through the Building Executive if a space heater is to be used to offset excessive air conditioning. ASHRAE Standard 90.1 prohibits simultaneous use of heating and cooling in the same space for the sole purpose of achieving comfort. Excessive cooling of a space should be reported to Facilities Management so that necessary adjustments may be made to the air conditioning system.

The use of portable space heaters is strictly prohibited in University residence halls. Space heaters are a potential source of fire if not used properly. Although both the Facilities Management Department and the Office of Environmental Health and Safety strongly discourage their use in all University buildings, guidelines have been established to reduce the risks associated with these devices. The requirements listed below, applicable code requirements, and manufacturers' recommendations must be followed to maintain a safe worker environment and to protect property.

All space heaters used on campus must be approved for fire safety, as defined by the National Fire Protection Association. Space heaters are permitted only in spaces monitored by smoke detectors connected to the fire alarm system. No liquid fueled space heaters (e.g., kerosene heaters) shall be used in any residential, office, classroom or research, or shop building. All space heaters must be Underwriters Listed or Factory Mutual (FM Global) approved for the intended use and must have been manufactured after the year 2000. Users should read and follow manufacturers' operating instructions. Heaters must not be used in areas where combustible atmospheres (flammable gasses or vapors) may be present. Heaters must not be used in wet areas or areas likely to become wet. Heaters must have elements that have a guard or are otherwise protected from contact by the user or other personnel. Each heater must be equipped with a safety switch that turns the unit off in the event that it is tilted or tipped over. Each heater must have a thermostat to automatically shut down the unit when the desired temperature is achieved. Each heater must be equipped with a shut-off timer.

Heaters must be kept at least 3 feet (36 inches) from all combustible materials, e.g. file cabinets, desks, trash-cans, paper boxes. Nothing may be placed on, over, above, or around a space heater. Do not place heaters under desks or in other enclosed areas. Heaters must be monitored at all times when in operation. Do not use heaters in rooms that will not be continually occupied. When not in use, the space heater shall be unplugged from the wall electric outlet. The use of extension cords with space heaters is prohibited. Do not place cords under rugs or set anything on a cord. Plugs should fit snugly into wall outlet. Heaters must be inspected daily by the user. Those unit having missing guards, control knobs, feet, etc. must be taken out of service immediately. Do not use portable space heaters if small children are present or expected in the area.

If any of these conditions cannot be met, contact the University Fire Marshal in the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (575-5448) for advice or assistance.