

Portable Heaters Safety Policy



Temporary use of portable heaters (aka space heaters) can be a useful way to supplement permanently installed heating systems or warm an outdoor workplace. But while keeping workers warm and comfortable is important, portable heaters can cause fires, explosions, carbon monoxide poisoning, and other hazards—not to mention risks of OHS penalties—especially if they're not properly constructed, placed, and operated. That's why it's essential for companies that furnish or allow workers to use portable heaters implement a written OHS policy to ensure their safe use. Here's a template policy that you can adapt based on the type of workplace you have and the kinds of heaters you use. Go to the OHS Insider website for a comprehensive [Portable Heater Safety & Compliance Game Plan](#).

Portable Heater Safety Policy

1. PURPOSE

ABC Company has adopted this Policy to establish mandatory requirements for the selection, approval, installation, operation, and inspection of portable heaters for the purpose of preventing fires, explosions, carbon monoxide (CO) exposure, electrical hazards, burns, and other safety risks associated with the use of portable heaters in the workplace

and ensuring compliance with Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) laws, the National Fire Code of Canada, the Canadian Electrical Code, provincial and municipal fire and building codes, and other applicable laws and standards.

2. DEFINITIONS

As used in this Policy:

- **“Approved heater”** means a portable heater that has been reviewed, authorized, and supplied by ABC Company in accordance with this Policy.
- **“CO”** means carbon monoxide.
- **“Portable heater”** (aka space heater) means a compact, movable device that is not permanently installed which is designed to generate supplemental heat to a small area, like a single room or office, as an alternative or addition to central heating systems for targeted warmth, including:
 - Electrical heaters.
 - Heaters that use propane, natural gas, diesel, kerosene or other combustible fuel (referred to collectively as “fuel-fired heaters”).
 - Radiant and infrared heaters.
 - Temporary construction and industrial heaters.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Use of portable heaters may pose significant risks of fire, explosion, asphyxiation and other hazards. To control these hazards, ABC Company prohibits the use of portable heaters in the workplace unless they are explicitly approved, supplied, and controlled in accordance with this Policy.

All personal, privately owned, or unapproved portable heaters are strictly prohibited.

4. **SCOPE OF POLICY**

The intent of this Policy is to ensure that all workers engaged to perform work for ABC Company at its work sites are protected from portable heater hazards regardless of who employs those workers or the terms of their employment with ABC Company, including:

- Full- and part-time workers paid by ABC Company.
- Temporary employees placed by an outside agency to work at the site.
- Contract labourers engaged to perform work at the site.
- Volunteers who work at the site for free.
- Workers employed by prime contractors, contractors, and subcontractors to perform work at the site under a contract with ABC Company.

5. **GENERAL PROHIBITIONS**

The following are strictly prohibited:

- Personal or privately owned portable heaters.
- Portable heaters that are not certified by CSA or an equivalent Canadian approval body.
- Use of portable heaters in areas with flammable vapours, combustible dusts, or explosive atmospheres unless specifically engineered and approved.
- Use of portable heaters that are damaged, modified or missing safety features.
- Plugging electrical heaters into power bars, extension cords, or multi-outlet adapters (unless specifically rated and approved).
- Indoor use of fuel-fired heaters that are not designed and approved for indoor operation.
- Use of portable heaters in high-risk areas, including but not limited to:

- Warehouses and storage areas.
- Manufacturing or production areas.
- Areas containing flammable or combustible materials.
- Exit routes, corridors, stairwells, or near emergency equipment.

6. **PORTABLE HEATER APPROVAL & AUTHORIZATION**

All portable heaters must be approved before use by [*list person(s)/department(s) responsible for approvals, e.g., the OHS Director*].

6.1 **Approval Criteria**

Approval of portable heaters will be based on, as applicable:

- Portable heater type and fuel source.
- CSA certification.
- Intended location and duration of use.
- Ventilation and clearance requirements.
- Electrical load capacity.
- Presence of combustible materials.
- Fire and CO detection systems.
- Occupancy and supervision levels.
- Ability to ensure the portable heater will not be left unattended.

6.2 **Documentation**

Approved heaters must be:

- Logged in an inventory or tracking system.
- Tagged or otherwise identified as approved.

7. ELECTRICAL HEATER REQUIREMENTS

Electrical heaters must be CSA-certified, rated for the environment and:

- Have tip-over shut-off.
- Have over-temperature protection.
- Be plugged directly into a wall outlet.

Electrical heaters must not share circuits with high-load equipment. Electrical cords must be in good condition and routed to prevent tripping or damage. Cords and plugs must be inspected regularly and removed from service if damaged.

8. FUEL-FIRED HEATER REQUIREMENTS

Indoor use of fuel-fired heaters is permitted only where:

- The heater is specifically designed and approved for indoor use.
- Adequate ventilation is provided.
- CO monitoring is installed and operational.

Fuel storage and refueling must comply with applicable fire code requirements and manufacturer instructions. Refueling is prohibited:

- While heaters are operating.
- In occupied indoor spaces, unless specifically approved and controlled.

9. PORTABLE HEATER PLACEMENT

Portable heaters must be placed:

- On surfaces that are stable, level, and non-combustible.
- In locations where fire extinguishers are close by and

readily accessible.

- In locations that meet the minimum clearance distance from combustible materials required by OHS laws, fire codes, and the instructions of the combustible materials' manufacturer.

The above minimum clearance distances must be maintained at all times. Portable heaters must not block exits or access routes or be left unattended if they are not designed for continuous operation. Combustible materials must not be dried or placed on portable heaters.

10. PORTABLE HEATER INSPECTION

Portable heaters must be inspected

- Before first use.
- During the approval process where an employee seeks approval for use of a portable heater.
- Periodically in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Any portable heater found to be unsafe must be immediately taken out of service, tagged, and removed from the workplace.

11. PORTABLE HEATER MAINTENANCE

Portable heaters must be repaired, serviced, and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, ABC Company maintenance policies, and applicable regulatory requirements and standards.

12. TRAINING & SUPERVISION

Employees and contractors using or working near portable heaters must receive instruction and training on:

- Portable heater hazards and controls.
- Approved and prohibited portable heaters.
- The portable heater approval process.
- How to respond to fires, explosions, fuel leaks, or spills and other portable heater emergencies.
- How to report smoke, overheating, unusual odours, alarms, or other indications of portable heater malfunction.

Supervisors are responsible for:

- Enforcing this policy.
- Removing unauthorized or unsafe portable heaters immediately.
- Ensuring corrective actions are implemented.

13. MONITORING & DISCIPLINE

Steps will be taken to monitor and review this Policy including via addressing portable heaters during field inspections and monthly workplace inspections. Failure to comply with the terms of this Policy will be grounds for discipline up to and including termination in accordance with the terms of ABC Company disciplinary policies and collective agreements.

14. PRIME CONTRACTORS, CONTRACTORS, & SUBCONTRACTORS

All prime contractors, contractors and subcontractors hired to perform work at an ABC Company workplace where portable heaters are used will be notified of and required to comply with the terms of this Policy and applicable safe work procedures. Prime contractors may follow the terms of either this Policy or alternative portable heater policies in performing the work under their control, provided that those

alternative policies:

- Meet the requirements of all applicable laws, regulations and standards.
- Provide at least equivalent protection as this Policy.
- Are coordinated with this Policy.