

Stay Warm & Safe: Essential Portable Space Heater Tips



Temporary heating devices are a potential ignition source that must be kept a safe distance from flammable and combustible materials like chemicals, wood, paper—and even tarpaulins used to cover the heater.

3 Reasons to Pay Attention

Portable space heaters are a leading cause of:

1. Fires;
2. Explosions; and
3. Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

3 Types of Portable Space Heaters

1. Kerosene Heaters

- Largest and heaviest type.
- Use fuel grade kerosene.
- Not regulated by a thermostat.
- May require use of outside ventilation source to prevent buildup of combustible vapours.

2. Electric Heaters

- Lighter, cleaner, and quieter than kerosene heaters.
- Function like an old-style radiator.
- Typically have a thermostat, allowing you to control temperature.

- Electric supply and flow potential source of ignition—although most models include automatic shutoff in case of electrical surge or tip-over.

3. Forced Air Heaters

- Lightest kind of portable heater.
- Can run on electric or liquid fuel.
- Have thermostat allowing you to control temperature.
- Generally most effective in heating a space quickly.
- Often also used as fans in hot weather.

8 Portable Space Heaters Do's and Don'ts

There are 8 things to do/not do when using portable space heaters at work (whether that means in office or at home):

- **DO** make sure you keep the heater at least 3 feet away from chemicals and other combustible items.
- **DON'T** use a portable space heater without first getting your supervisor's permission (if applicable).
- **DO** make sure the space heater you use has a label indicating that it's been tested by a testing lab like the Underwriter's Laboratories (UL).
- **DON'T** use a light-duty extension cord or multi-outlet strip/surge protector with a high wattage electric heater—it might start a fire.
- **DO** keep electric heaters plugged directly into the outlet.
- **DON'T** place electric heaters in enclosed spaces like bathrooms (unless you get a supervisor's permission if applicable).
- **DO** ensure that electric heaters are grounded with a 3-pronged plug.
- **DON'T** run the power or extension cord across the floor so that it becomes a tripping hazard.