

Portable Space Heater Safety

Introduction:

The use of portable space heaters becomes more common during the winter months. These portable heaters may be used as a temporary source of heat where the facility's heating system fails to provide adequate heat. It's important to understand that using a space heater can be a safety hazard. Implementing preventive controls and practicing safety measures can reduce the risk of fire and incidents resulting in injury.

Discussion Points:

- Using a space heater can be a safety hazard
- Implement preventive controls and safety measures to reduce risk of fire and injury
- Use approved space heaters
- Train employees before using space heaters
- Follow manufacturer specifications

Discussion:

The use of space heaters should be allowed only with prior approval from a supervisor or management. Only heaters approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories) or ETL (Intertek) should be used.

Safety measures should be implemented to reduce the risk of fire and injury, including inspecting the heater before each use by a qualified person, fuel-fired heaters should be inspected annually; using the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer; installing and maintaining carbon monoxide alarms to avoid the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning; installing space heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions, ensure all fuel-burning equipment is properly vented to the outside allowing for proper venting of exhaust.

Employees should be trained to use space heaters to prevent injury and ensure the work area remains safe. A space heater not used properly can cause fire, electric shock, or produce carbon monoxide gas. Incidents caused by space heaters account for millions of dollars in property damage and contribute to thousands of injuries and hundreds of fatalities each year.

No federal safety regulations prohibit the use of portable space heaters in the workplace. However, OSHA requires the equipment to be used according to manufacturer specifications. The type of space heater used should be carefully considered and selected based on its compatibility with the environment in which it will be used.

Employers should have a written policy that explains proper care and includes guidelines to prevent accidents, injuries, and death.

As always, stay safe out there!



January 31, 2022