

## Space Heater Policy and Safety Precautions



The recent snowfall reminds us that we are now entering into the winter months, and the ability to keep our homes and workplaces at a comfortable temperature raises fire safety concerns. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that in 2012, heating equipment fires was a leading cause of fire fatalities in residences nationwide, (33% of all residential fires and 81% of all heating fire deaths). During the months of December through February, one-half of all heating equipment related fires occurred. Placing things that can burn too close to heating equipment or placing heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding, was the leading factor contributing to ignition in fatal home heating fires and accounted for more than half (53%) of home heating fire deaths. Use of space heaters is prohibited in Campus Dormitories and Apartments.

In the workplace here at the University of Delaware, the Space Heater Policy found at:

<http://www.udel.edu/ehs/generalhs/fire/space-heater.html> directs building occupants to contact Facilities Maintenance and Operations at 302-831-1141 to report a heating deficiency. Once the deficiency is verified, efforts are made to restore the heating system to appropriate level, or issue an approved space heater as an interim measure until proper heating can be restored. Occupants are prohibited from bringing residential space heaters to work, as uncertified equipment, or the improper use of some substandard brands can cause electrical overloads (trip breakers), which could result in an accidental fire. Space Heater Safety Tips include but are not limited to the following:

- All heaters must be Underwriters Listed or Factory Mutual approved for their intended use
- Heaters must have a thermostat to automatically shut down the unit when the desired temperature is achieved
- Heaters must have a tip over automatic shutdown feature
- Heaters must be kept at least 3 feet (36 inches) from all combustible materials e.g. file cabinets, desks, trash cans, paper boxes, etc.
- Do not place heaters under desks or other enclosed areas
- Heaters must be monitored when in operation, they should always be attended and shut off when leaving
- Plug heater directly into a wall receptacle. Never plug it into an extension cord
- Heaters need to be monitored daily. Those heaters missing guards, control knobs, feet, etc. must be taken out of service immediately and repaired by a competent person. Do not use heaters in rooms that will not be continually occupied
- Do not use portable space heaters if small children are expected in the area

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Please contact Kevin McSweeney, Campus Fire Marshal at 302-831-6847 or [kmcsween@udel.edu](mailto:kmcsween@udel.edu) if you have any questions.