

Safety Guideline: Portable Space Heaters

Revision: 11/17/2022

Purpose: This portable space heater guideline is for Hope College faculty and staff to ensure the proper selection and safe use of portable space heaters in workspaces located around Hope College.

* This guidance document is not intended for residential buildings (halls, cottages, apartments) as portable space heaters are prohibited in residence buildings (please refer to student handbook).

The office of Occupational Health and Fire Safety does not recommend any specific makes/models of portable space heaters for use on campus, but the following guidelines are listed to aid in the proper selection.

Criteria for Portable Space Heaters

- Only electric heaters should be used.
- All space heaters must have the certification of an independent testing laboratory, UL listed or Factory Mutual, approved for their intended use.
- Portable space heaters must have “tip protection” where the heater must turn off automatically if tipped over.
- Heaters must have a thermostat to automatically shut down the unit when the desired temperature is achieved.

Portable space heaters are prohibited in laboratories using or storing flammable or combustible chemicals.

Space Heaters Not Allowed

- Heaters with exposed heating elements or open flames, even if they are UL listed, should not be utilized.
- Units that produce heat by means of burning fuel, such as wood, propane, natural gas, or fuel oil should not be used, even if they are UL listed.

Safe Use of Space Heaters

- Space heaters **must** be plugged directly into a wall receptable. **Never plug a heater into an extension cord or power strip / surge protector.**
- Heaters must be kept **at least 3 feet** (36 inches) from all combustible materials.
- Do **not** place heaters under desks or in other enclosed areas.
- Locate heaters out of high traffic areas where they may pose a tripping hazard.
- Do **not** plug any other electrical devices into the same outlet as a space heater.
- Space heaters should **never** be left unattended. They need to be monitored while in operation. Space heaters should be on turned off and unplugged at the end of the work day or whenever the individual leaves the room.