Don’t Get Burned By Portable Heaters



Portable heaters are handy devices. They are useful as temporary sources of heat in unexpectedly cold weather. But these electric or fuel-powered heaters also come with hazards. They can cause electrical shock, carbon monoxide poisoning, fires and explosions.

Keep these guidelines in mind for safe use of portable heaters this winter:

- Read the manufacturer’s instructions before attempting to operate a portable heater.
- Maintain portable heaters correctly. Inspect regularly for defects such as poor connections on propane heaters or signs of wiring damage to electrical heaters.
- The area must be safe for the use of a portable heater. Do not place it where it can set combustible materials on fire. Paper, wood debris, cardboard, and even a curtain or frayed carpet can ignite if the heater element is placed too close to these items.
- Electrical heaters must not overload circuits; this situation can cause a fire.
- Provide the proper ventilation, as instructed by the manufacturer. Fuel heaters require ventilation to prevent the build-up of flammable gases and vapors. The accumulation of poisonous carbon monoxide, a by-product of combustion, is of particular concern when burning fossil fuels.
- Use only the correct fuel in a portable heater. Substituting another fuel could result in an explosion.
- Never use an ordinary portable heater or any other source of ignition where there is a possible explosive atmosphere. This means you must not use a portable heater anywhere near flammable liquids or fuels because the vapors can explode.
- Approved explosion-proof electric or hot water heaters are designed for use in areas where vapors or gases create an explosive atmosphere. Examples of locations where these might be used are fuel storage and dispensing areas, spray painting areas and natural gas storage or handling operations.
- Another special kind of portable heater is made to ventilate confined spaces such as manholes and tanks. Air which is fresh, clean and warm is forced into the space, replacing explosive vapors and other respiratory hazards.
- Shut off a heater before leaving the area. Do not leave a heater unattended unless it is specifically designed for this kind of use.
- Do not allow a heater to become a tripping hazard. Place heaters, fuel tanks and cords out of traffic areas.

Don’t forget portable heater safety off the job. Keep these additional tips in mind:

- You must recognize the dangers of using propane heaters and other appliances in recreational vehicles. Fatal fires, explosions and carbon monoxide exposures

have occurred in these circumstances. Carefully follow all instructions, and maintain this equipment regularly.
- Never use a heater in a tent. The tent can become engulfed in flames in an instant, trapping you in a fire.
- When using a portable heater in your home, place it carefully away from flammable or combustible materials. Never place it near a bed where blankets or pillows could fall on it. Do not sleep with a portable heater operating.
- Don’t use a portable electric heater near moisture or water, such as in the bathroom, because of the danger of electrical shock.

Portable heaters can greatly increase your comfort while working in a chilly environment. They are also used to keep materials warm and dry to prevent damage and make them easier to work with. Use portable heaters safely according to instructions.