



Standard Operating Procedures

**Fire Prevention Services
Office of Campus Safety**

The University of Texas at Austin

304 E. 24th Street, SER Suite 202, Austin, TX 78713

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SCOPING & APPLICATION

PROCEDURES FOR USE OF SPACE HEATERS

The following provides requirements for use of Space Heaters at the University of Texas at Austin.

Definition: Space Heater – A portable electric heater, also called a space heater is defined as a device that plugs into a standard wall A/C outlet or receptacle and that produces heat for the purpose of heating a room or area. Space heaters may be a radiant type heater that circulates warm oil inside a unit that looks like a radiator, may have exposed metal coils that heat up and turn red or may be a “ceramic” heater that has a non-combustible surface that is heated and radiates warm air. Some space heaters may also incorporate a fan to distribute warm air. Space heaters pose a serious fire hazard due to the potential contact with combustible materials and the potential for overheating the device’s electrical cord or the electrical wiring in the building.

The most common cause of fires in buildings are unattended heaters, dirty fireplaces and combustible materials located in too close proximity to a heat source. The following requirements shall apply to the use of portable space heaters at the University of Texas at Austin Campus:

1. Authorized Use

- a. Portable space heaters shall only be allowed to be used in building areas where there is an issue with distributing heat to the occupant(s).
- b. All portable space heaters shall be disconnected (unplugged) from the electrical power source when not in use.

- c. Portable space heaters shall not be left in use when not attended.
- d. Portable space heaters are designed to supplement a room's primary heat source. Portable space heaters are not designed for continuous use and shall not be used as a primary heating source for an area.
- e. Portable space heaters **SHALL NOT BE USED IN SLEEPING AREAS (DORM ROOMS)**.

2. Types of Heaters - Where Authorized the following requirements shall be adhered to:

- a. All space heaters shall be Underwriter Laboratory (UL) listed and shall incorporate a tip-over switch which will turn off the heating element and fan if the space heater is knocked over.
- b. All space heaters shall be in good repair and shall have an electrical cord long enough to reach the electrical outlet. Electrical cords shall not be located across doorways, aisle ways, under rugs or in areas where the cord may be exposed to possible physical or environmental damage. **EXTENTION CORDS OR POWER STRIPS SHALL NOT BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH SPACE HEATERS.**
- c. Space heaters shall be disconnected from the electrical power source (unplugged) at the end of the work day or if the space heater shall be left unattended for an extended period of time.
- d. Portable space heaters shall have a sealed element and shall not produce any flames, fumes or use any fuel.
- e. Space heaters having exposed heat coils that are not protected by a heat grate or screen are prohibited from use.
- f. Portable space heater elements shall not exceed 100 degrees Centigrade or 212 degrees Fahrenheit.
- g. Portable space heater size **SHALL NOT EXCEED 1200 WATTS.**
- h. Additional electrical devices **SHALL NOT** be plugged into the same electrical outlet as a space heater.

- i. Space heaters shall be kept away from water and out of damp locations.
- j. Space heaters shall only be plugged into outlets on circuits that are sufficiently capable of handling the amperage draw of the space heater and other equipment on the circuit.

3. Requirements for Use of Space Heaters

- a. Space heaters shall be maintained a minimum of three (3) feet from all combustible materials (i.e. trash/recycling bins, furniture, coat racks, draperies, etc.).
- b. Space heaters shall not be used within fifty (50) feet of flammable material storage.
- c. Space heaters shall be placed in a location such that they do not create a tripping or evacuation hazard.
- d. Fire/Smoke rated doors shall not be blocked open in order to better distribute heat produced by space heaters.
- e. Portable space heater ventilation openings shall not be altered or obstructed.
- f. Portable space heaters shall not be used in dusty environments (workshops, agricultural buildings, etc.)
- g. Portable space heaters shall not be placed in high traffic areas.

4. Portable Patio Heaters

- a. All portable patio heaters shall be UL listed for the intended use.
- b. All combustible materials (including tree branches) shall be maintained a minimum clear distance of ten (10) feet from the top of the heater.
- c. Portable patio heaters shall not be placed under building overhangs or soffits.
- d. Portable patio heaters shall be kept a minimum of three (3) feet around all table and umbrellas.
- e. Portable patio heaters shall only use the fuel type recommended by the heater manufacturer.