



Home Tips®



• CHRISTIAN BUILDING INSPECTORS, INC., 3697 HABERSHAM LANE, DULUTH, GEORGIA 30096, 770-849-0920 • DECEMBER 2006 •

Q & A

What You Should Know About Space Heaters

A space heater is a self-contained, free standing air heating appliance intended for installation in the space being heated and not intended for duct connection. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 25,000 residential fires every year are associated with the use of room (space) heaters. More than 300 persons die in these fires. An estimated 6,000 persons receive hospital emergency room care for burn injuries associated with contacting hot surfaces of room heaters, mostly in non-fire situations.

General Suggestions for All Space Heaters

CPSC offers the following general suggestions for selection, safe use, and maintenance of gas, wood, kerosene and electric space heaters:

- Select a space heater with a guard around the flame area or the heating element. This will help keep children, pets and clothing away from the heat source.
- When selecting a heater, look for one that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory. These heaters have been determined to meet specific safety standards, and manufacturers are required to provide important use and care information to the consumer.
- Buy a heater that is the correct size for the area you want to heat. The wrong size heater could produce more pollutants and may not be an efficient use of energy.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions. Keep the owner's manual in a convenient place to refer to when needed.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters. Some heaters have very hot surfaces. Children should not be permitted to either adjust the controls or move the heater.
- Keep doors open to the rest of the house if you are using an unvented fuel-burning space heater. This helps to prevent pollutant build-up and promotes proper combustion. Even vented heaters require ventilation for proper combustion.
- Never leave a space heater on when you go to sleep or leave the area. For fuel-fired heaters, dangerous levels of carbon monoxide could accumulate or uncontrolled burning could cause a fire.
- Never use or store flammable liquids (such as gasoline) around a space heater. The flammable vapors can flow from one part of the room to another and be ignited by the open flame or by an electrical spark.

- Be aware that mobile homes require specially designed heating equipment. Only electric or vented fuel-fired heaters should be used.
- Place heaters at least three feet away from objects such as bedding, furniture and drapes. Never use heaters to dry clothes or shoes. Do not place heaters where towels or other objects could fall on the heater and start a fire.

Specific Suggestions

- Different types of space heaters present some different safety problems. You should be aware of important information and advice about these specific types of heaters.
- Have gas and kerosene space heaters inspected annually by qualified persons to ensure that they are properly adjusted and clean. Keep the wick of the kerosene heater clean and properly adjusted. Appliances that are not working properly can release harmful and even fatal amounts of pollutants.
- Be certain that your heater is placed on a level, hard and nonflammable surface, not on rugs or carpets.
- Keep the heater in a safe working condition. Replace missing guards and controls at once. Never operate a defective heater. Have all necessary repairs done by qualified repair persons.

Kerosene Space Heaters

- **Never use gasoline in a kerosene heater.** Even very small quantities of gasoline in the heater tank can cause a fire. Kerosene should never be stored or carried in a container that has had gasoline because the residual gasoline is enough to increase the flammability of the kerosene.
- Only use 1-K kerosene in kerosene heaters. Kerosene should be purchased from a dealer who can certify that it is 1-K grade kerosene. The fact that kerosene is "water clear" does not ensure that it is 1-K, since both 1-K and 2-K can appear clear.
- Never fill the fuel tank of a kerosene heater beyond the full mark because as the fuel warms, it expands and could spill and cause a fire.
- Do not attempt to remove the fuel tank, or refuel the heater when it is operating or hot. The heater should not be moved while it is operating.
- Refuel heater out of doors.
- If flare-up or uncontrolled flaming occurs, do not attempt to move the heater. If your heater is equipped with a manual shut-off switch, activate the switch to turn off the heater. Do not attempt to extinguish a kerosene-heater fire with water or blankets. If activation of the shut-off switch

