

## Using Portable Space Heaters at Tufts University

Tufts University properties include hundreds of buildings that contain thousands of workspaces of all types. Due to the complexity and variety of workspace environmental conditions, the building heating system may not be sufficient to obtain the comfort level desired by the some workspace occupants. In such cases, a portable space heater (if used properly) may provide a workable solution to this condition.

*A quick review the Space Heater policy at Tufts University:*

Portable space heaters are a potential source of fire if not used properly. The requirements listed below, applicable code requirements, and manufacturer's recommendations must be followed to maintain a safe environment.

If a space cannot be adequately heated via the installed building heating system, do the following:

- Contact **Tufts Facilities Operations Desk** to report the condition.
- If the installed system cannot be repaired in a timely manner, Facilities may recommend a temporary space heater meeting the requirements listed below.
  1. All heaters must be Underwriters Listed (UL) or Factory Mutual approved for their intended use.
  2. Heaters must have a thermostat to automatically shut down the unit when the desired temperature is achieved.
  3. Heaters must have a tip over automatic shutdown feature.
  4. Heaters must be kept at least 3 feet (36 inches) from all combustible materials e.g. file cabinets, desks, trash cans, paper boxes, etc.

**If you will be using a portable space heater, ensure you follow these safety tips:**



- Do not place heaters under desks or other enclosed areas.
- Heaters must be monitored when in operation.
- 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.
- Keep doors and windows closed, including storm windows. This will help prevent freeze-ups.
- Keep space heaters away from exit ways, walkways and paths of travel.
- Do not use space heaters in wet areas like bathrooms or kitchens.
- Do not use portable space heaters if small children are expected in the area.
- **No open-coil space heaters are permitted in any university buildings.**
- **Space heaters of any type are prohibited in laboratories.**

In summary:

- If a space heater is needed...obtain the correct TYPE (no open coils)
- Learn to use the features of the space heater – understand how it functions
- Apply personal responsibility and due diligence regarding *where and when* to use space heaters. Don't allow complacency to lead to unsafe practices in the workplace.
- Be sure to CHECK that you have shut off the unit when not in use.
- If possible, unplug the unit whenever feasible at the end of the day...and especially over the weekends.

FEMA has produced a very short video that summarizes this topic.

Please follow the link:  
Portable Heater Safety by FEMA  
<http://youtu.be/9AMQIASnmNU>

Please contact **Tufts Fire Safety at 617-627-2745** for additional assistance.

